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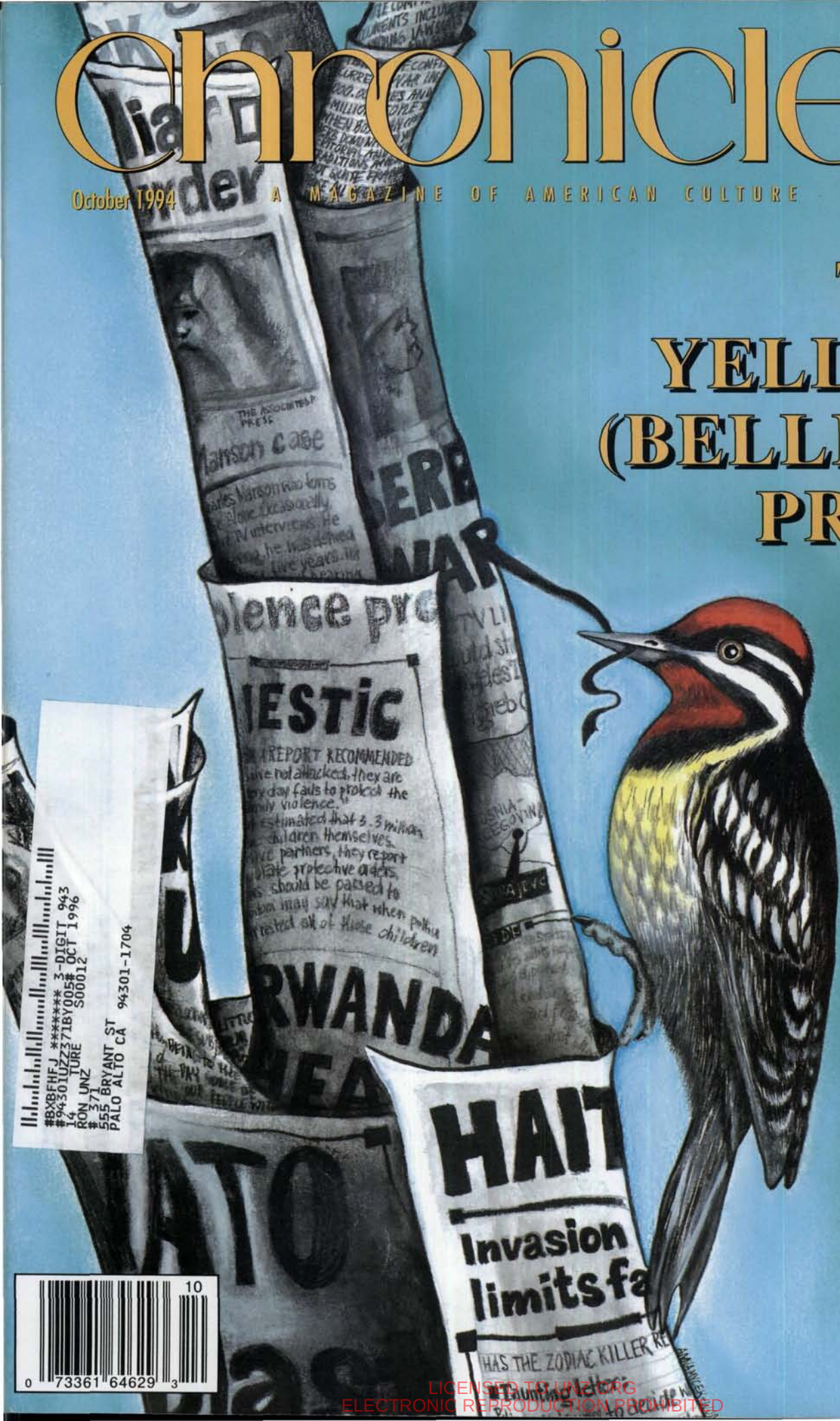

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Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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On Russia

I agree with Professor W. Bruce Lincoln ("The Burden of Russian History," March 1994) that Russia's economic and political system is prone to break society into two parts: "them," those responsible for making decisions and managing the country, and "us," the simple people deadly indifferent to everything that doesn't touch them immediately—i.e., high politics. I also agree that the current system can be traced to its roots in serfdom and the "feeding system." But this is just the tip of the iceberg. This "feeding system" has a much deeper structure than many historians realize.

First, we can think of this system as a hierarchical structure with a czar on the top and the people on the bottom, with many "governing in the czar's name." But the trick of keeping hierarchical systems working is not simply in increasing the number of levels. Those at the top must force the people at the bottom to govern themselves. Of course, I do not mean in the Western sense of self-government and democracy. The key words in our case are *krugovaya poruka*—a kind of common responsibility when people are linked together by the obligation to produce a certain amount of something (money, labor, units of goods, recruits, etc.). If one or a few fail, everybody will be punished.

So let's assume you belong to a group in which all people are tied together by these links, such as a Soviet military division (which is a fairly good model of a totalitarian system). In this case, you know that if for any reason (moral, political, economic, religious, or health-related) you refuse to do what you are told, everyone will immediately suffer. Moreover, everybody knows that you know this, and you know that everybody knows that you know . . . and so on. The game is to follow the general line. You wouldn't say, "I don't want to do this or that because it is against my principles." First, you wouldn't want to say this because you probably don't want to be beaten up by the group. Second, whatever your principles are, one of them may be something like "not to cause other people trouble and suffering," and you know that your refusal will cause "innocent" people to suffer. That is how it works.

Also important is the role of informal leaders. These people are the mediators between "us" and "them." They are not legitimate bosses approved and sent from the top of the system. They are of the same flesh and bones as "us." They speak our language. They don't use official nonsense like "according to the latest decisions of the Party, we must. . . ." They understand our needs and the tricks we use to fool our bosses. It is these mediators who actually make the whole system work. Some of them may become formal leaders in time (if they succeed), meaning "they" can be divided into "us-like" and "alien-like." I remember from my own experience in the Soviet Army that all of the officers were divided by "us" into two groups. The first group included those who were closer to the soldiers, spoke their language, and had a sort of informal power to force everybody to conform (although they could use formal power as well). Officers of this kind had the same way of thinking as the soldiers—somewhat primitive but fairly natural. Officers who fell into the second group relied more on the approved regulations and were more likely to use communist and Soviet demagogy like "in these days of *perestroika* you must take more care of your belongings and whatever you store in your bedside table. . . ."

Soldiers preferred and were more likely to obey officers of the first group than of the second, but both types of officers (nonideologists and ideologists alike) were truly servants of the totalitarian system, neither could stomach the slightest idea of democracy (the former were even stronger enemies of democracy than the latter), and both were very serious and proud about what they were doing. In my case, it was building a railway on the steppes of northern Kazakhstan (of course without pay) like the serfs did in the 19th century. How little has changed since those times.

The moral is that both "we" and "they" were necessary elements of the totalitarian system. Totalitarian ideology was spread over all Soviet people, and we can speak about "bearers of totalitarian ideology" the same way we speak about "bearers of native language." So, "we" were truly absorbed in and participated

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in governing ourselves, rather than opposing "them." Of course, life was not the paradise described by communist propaganda. But maybe the above helps explain why people newly liberated from totalitarian systems are not likely to accept democratic principles like "the right to have multiple choices" and so on.

Also, we shouldn't think of pilfering as the main reason for scarcity in the former U.S.S.R. As many researchers show (especially Hungarian economist János Kornai), deficit is an intrinsic aspect of socialism, one that necessarily leads to the exhaustion of all its resources. But the Soviet people didn't realize this fact. They were told that individual persons were responsible for deficits and shortcomings in our economy. Nevertheless, some people played with the idea that a more general reason for scarcity might exist. Those who did this seriously and in written form, called dissidents, were of special interest to the KGB, who tried to separate them from other honest citizens. Those who questioned scarcity in humorous ways were considered fairly innocent, and they actually were.

The function of humor was mainly to let off steam (like carnivals did in the Middle Ages). It would be misleading to think that people "cynically" laughed at the whole socialist system's inability to build a sound economy, taking this system as something created by "them" and therefore looking at the system "from the outside." No, people were laughing at themselves, both "us" and "them," both government and the people. People would have looked suspiciously at anyone who laughed at their country from the "outside" like a foreigner, like an alien who didn't want to live with them and share their problems. Moreover, people would have felt a kind of religious fear and disgrace if somebody told them seriously why and how socialism necessarily leads to scarcity. And people would probably have beaten up anyone who attempted to say something like "Stalin's regime was just the same as Hitler's—both were totalitarian ones."

Yes, people told anecdotes about Brezhnev's ignorance of a word in his own speech at the Party Forum, but when they read in a newspaper about figure skaters who didn't want to return home from a contest abroad, everyone felt disgraced and astonished. When chessmaster Viktor Korchnoi chose to stay abroad after his championship contest with Anatoly Karpov, he was treated as a betrayer in the Soviet press. Karpov got the Order of Lenin for his two successive victories over the "enemy," and this government attitude in some way reflected what simple people thought was good and fair. Children wondered what a nightmare it would be if they were born in another country. It was so natural to live in the best country in the world! "We" in the mouth of a Soviet meant something more than just a pronoun. It meant a kind of mutual involvement in something that was sometimes silly, sometimes great, sometimes strange, but always something you could not and did not want to eliminate.

—Ilya Lipkovich
Almaty, Kazakhstan

There was a Soviet-era joke about three men who all worked at the same factory and were arrested by the KGB on the same day. The first man had arrived early for work: he was arrested for espionage. The second was arrested for sabotage: he was late that day. The third man was on time for his job, but he too was arrested; the charge was anti-Soviet propaganda: he was wearing a Swiss watch. Though Professor Lincoln points out that the prerevolutionary czarist regime had embarked on a course of reform, and that the Soviet regime installed a massive party apparatus and discouraged or persecuted the best and brightest Soviet citizens, I detect the seed of what one may call the Pipes (Harvard's Professor Richard Pipes) argument in Professor Lincoln's article: that is, that the Bolshevik regime was merely the czarist regime writ large. The point of the joke is that something far more sinister was at work during the Soviet era than Russian paranoia on steroids. The communist regime is a part of Russian history, but it was not a product of Russian culture.

In contrast to the Pipes argument, one may consider the Solzhenitsyn line: the Soviet regime represented a sharp break with the Russian past, not a continuation of it in party-dictatorship form. Soviet repression was so monstrous by comparison with that of the czars that the evidence suggests a regime that was not only different in the quality and quantity of its crimes, but different in kind. The horrors of the Soviet era are only now beginning to be fully revealed. Mass graves are constantly being uncovered, and the scale of the communist experiment far surpassed Hitler's efforts to revamp Europe. More than 20 million. This is the low end of estimates that range upward to more than 60 million. In his 1990 book *Lethal Politics*, R.J. Rummel of the United States Institute of Peace surveys the Soviet record of mass murder and gives a figure of 61,911,000 victims of "Utopia in power." He quotes Lenin on the Bolshevik policy of terror. "When we are reproached with cruelty," says the father of the Soviet Union, "we wonder how people can forget the most elementary Marxism." The Soviet regime, like every other spawn of the god of progress, was a materialist one, the product of a secular ideology whose author was a lonely German Jew working in the belly of Victorian London. Of course, czarist-era attitudes and practices persisted in one form or another during the Soviet era, since no people can completely shed the skin of their old selves, but when anyone discusses the shambles that is postcommunist Russia, particularly the moral vacuum that the communists left behind, surely we must take into consideration the warping of the human soul that took place under a regime which murdered its own people with such zeal and which declared God dead and Man's Ideology ascendant. No wonder the Russians appear so helpless, so incompetent, and so incapable of taking charge of their own lives. The Soviet regime's terrorism and brain-numbing propaganda not only persecuted the best and the brightest, but through a sort of natural (for totalitarian regimes) selection, they came close to producing the New Soviet Man automaton Lenin and Stalin dreamed of. This is one "burden" that Mr. Lincoln did not emphasize in his article. If we accept the Pipes argument without reservation, then how is one to explain the Cultural Revolution in China, the "Bamboo Gulag" of Vietnam, or the killing fields of Cambodia?

Professor Lincoln appears to accept uncritically the notion that a system based on the "lawful use of power" necessarily means liberal democracy and that Russian, as opposed to Soviet, history only brings "burdens," that is, roadblocks to freedom. Russian critics of "progress" and Western materialism, taking into account the rich heritage of Western thought and hoping to avoid the tyranny that has so afflicted their nation, have hit upon something that is almost forgotten in Europe and America: the rule of law means nothing without

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the acceptance of God. Without God, positive law—ever changing, always relative—carries the day. They recognize that without God all things are possible and see not only the Soviet Union but the contemporary West as telling examples of what "all things" can be. The czarist system, for all its arbitrary power, was limited to some extent by the moral strictures of Christianity: the gulag was simply not possible then. These Russian critics hope that their people will turn to the Church, to the best of old Russia, to the culture that spawned not only *proizvol* but Tolstoy and Tchaikovsky, to find the raw materials for building a new Russia. To fail to do so means once again to impose an alien system from above, for where else could the Westernized Russia come from? Moreover, even if one accepts the argument that Russian culture produced Soviet tyranny, it is wrongheaded to assume that is all it produced or is capable of producing. Our own civilization, after all, has produced St. Thomas, Shakespeare, and Mother Teresa, as well as Hitler, Dr. Kevorkian, and Hillary Clinton. One can surely find much to say in favor of a (Russian) culture that produces an Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn as its social conscience. The closest thing that we have is Phil or Oprah. Our ancestors knew that the good life is not necessarily one that is materially comfortable. Russia, assuming there is enough of the best of her heritage left to build on and enough people who care about doing the building, may never be a democracy or a consumers' paradise, but she could still be a society that her people could be proud of.

—Wayne Allensworth
Purcellville, VA

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

O.J. SIMPSON is now the most famous human being upon the planet. The details of the case can be of no interest to anyone intellectual enough to enjoy a game of "Go Fish," but the debates, private as well as public, it has spawned will haunt us for some time. From fairly early on most whites admitted to believing him guilty, while a majority of blacks profess to think him innocent. In fact, what black Americans mean when they say that O.J. is an innocent victim of a white conspiracy is something much simpler and more reasonable than is supposed. What they mean is that Mr. Simpson is guilty of a justifiable or excusable homicide. They are not basing their defense on the old grounds of the *crime passionelle*, since, after all, the Simpsons were divorced, and if it were argued that Mr. Simpson took a Christian view of marriage, one would have to explain his own divorce, to say nothing of his own incessant womanizing.

No, it is not as outraged husband that Simpson is to be defended but as a black who killed a white. Khallid Muhammad, among the many black leaders supporting Simpson, had already received a standing ovation at Howard University for demanding a Colin Ferguson Day to commemorate the psychopath who shot up a train car full of white people, and his opinion seems to be widely shared within the community.

Two years ago in *Chronicles* I wrote an essay on the return of status to American law. Once upon a time, a man's status determined the kind of justice he received in court, but after several hundred years of reform, the civilized theory of equality before the law had triumphed, at least in theory. Today, it is increasingly difficult to sustain that fiction. Affirmative action requirements, hate crimes statutes, sensitivity training, and the double jeopardy inflicted upon the officers in the Rodney King case make it clear that there is one law for minorities—however defined—and another for those of us with the misfortune to be born straight white males of European descent. The entire Simpson case is an amusing *reductio ad absurdum* of this principle, since the public debate boils down to a shouting match between feminists clamoring for more laws protecting wives from abusive husbands and so-called black leaders working hard to persuade their followers that they are victims of discrimination. All we need now is for the ADL—a bigot lobby claiming to defend the interests of the most successful ethnic group in the history of the world, American Jews—to enter the picture on behalf of Mr. Goldman. I'd love this country, if I didn't have to live here.

Mr. Simpson's status is defined both by his celebrity and by his race. As a hero to good old American football fans whose minds are too uncomplicated to appreciate baseball or soccer, Simpson is entitled to special treatment, and as a rich celebrity he is entitled to be defended by the high-price lawyers that only rich liberals can afford to hire when they are trapped by the oppressive legal system they have created. But even if Mr. Simpson had spent all his money on cocaine, his status as victim would ensure him first-class treatment, and in Los Angeles it is going to be very hard to find a mixed race jury that will vote unanimously for a verdict of guilty.

But suppose by some miracle Mr. Simpson is found guilty. He will most certainly not face the death penalty. Black leaders all over the country are already insisting that the death penalty is selectively used against blacks. The fact that blacks are approximately nine times as likely to commit murder as whites might explain why so many blacks are on death row, but even supposing there were bias in the application of the death penalty, what sane person could possibly care? I happen to believe that in fact whites are more likely to be executed than blacks, but so long as some murderers are put to death, I cannot complain, and if I were black, I should feel even more strongly on this point, since the victims of most black murderers are black. If a black is more likely to get executed for killing whites than for killing blacks, this does not mean that if he were returned to the streets he would not be more likely to kill members of his own race.

The entire debate over the death penalty reveals the stupidity and dishonesty of America's media establishment. The worst victims of such disinformation are the many otherwise decent black men and women who are being fed this steady diet of lies and hate. It is poisoning their character today, and before too long the inevitable white backlash will not distinguish the gang-

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sters and punks who are besieging our cities like packs of wild dogs from the ordinary people who have been reduced to servile laziness by the welfare state and infected with a sense of victimization that prevents them from doing anything to help themselves.

—*Thomas Fleming*

PBS HUCKSTERS Biff and Muffy bleated "Gimme! Gimme! Gimme!" from my TV and radio a couple of weeks back. They're volunteers who run infomercial plead-athons on WTAX (KTAX west of the Mississippi). Looking weary after a dreadful day in the operating room or maybe on the trading floor—and even though their Pierre Cardins were rumpled and Paco Rabanne was fading—Muffy and Biff still found selfless time to honk the usual high-minded bluster about quality, variety, diversity, excellence, and community service, not to mention motherhood, hot dogs, and the crumminess of commercial broadcasting.

Great stuff, huh? Quick, name one regular show that's produced by PBS in your town. Now ask your friends if they can. No, not *Sesame Street*, not *Nova*, something *locally* produced for all of those bucks. What is this tony team praising? Fact—PBS is where thousands of people get paid to entertain hundreds of viewers with a grant from our children—make-work for Ivy League semiotics majors. In fact, Nielsen's data show that the 196 licensed PBS stations are primarily sitters for preschoolers and the aged.

According to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, "PBS's numbers are dwarfed by its commercial network competitors. Its top-rated show [last] fall was the farewell movie of *I'll Fly Away*, which didn't attract enough viewers to survive on NBC. The 5.2 rating, cause for celebration at PBS, would have ranked the movie near the bottom of prime-time commercial shows. On a typical night in prime time, PBS reaches 2.4 percent of American homes." Need a safe-house for *America's Most Wanted*? Star them on a PBS show.

Suppose your cable company carried another distant PBS station and your local outfit went dark tonight . . . who would notice? Why are there local installations at all, when we could beam PBS from a cable-linked satellite like CNN, A&E, C-SPAN, or Nickelodeon? And why do Biff and Muffy keep telling us how much they pay for all that marginal programming? With rarely more than a three-share, why did the feds give a quarter of a billion tax dollars last year to PBS to make that stuff? And since they've already grabbed so much of our money, why not just tell them, "Hey Biff and Muffy, we already gave at the office!"

Shallow, small-minded thinking? Take a trip to your PBS affiliate. Marvel at their equipment. And then ask where their capital, not their operating, their *capital* budget comes from. Imagine if your boss didn't have to pay a bank note for land, equipment, computers, or even the purchase of the business. Imagine how much more would be left to pay you. On top of that, imagine getting listeners to mail some of their tax dollars to you instead of Washington! Wow, free equipment, then tax-subsidized bonuses (money for nothing and Muffy for free)! Well, what do you think tax-deductible contributions are?

Every buck oozing into a neighborhood PBS money-pit feeds the deficit that your kids will have to pay. Toxic tax spill. Even though Biff and Muffy could never utter it, each of those PBS shows is brought to you, literally, by a grant from your kids. And the fact that they spend about a quarter of all dollars raised to solicit even more pledges confirms that PBS T-shirt, "It is morally wrong to let suckers keep their money."

And what whimsical programming they've got. Take the MacNeil/Lehrer illusion of balance: pit Democratic left-wing columnist Mark Shields against Clinton advisor David Gergen on a weekly political debate during the presidential election. That's like booking Anita Hill and Lorena Bobbitt to probe the joy of the American housewife. And biased? How can it be when the third-largest source of most operating (and virtually all capital) dollars (after pledges and business gifts) is the federal government, in the form of grants from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Remember CPB? That's the independent organization Congress created in 1967 to keep politics out of funding. Listen to Muffy and Biff smugly reveal, "This programming's not for everybody." They got that right. Judging by the numbers, you're less likely to find a true conservative on PBS than in Berkeley's sociology department.

PBS has a new and potent president, Ervin Duggan, a 54-year-old ex-member of the Federal Communications Commission and its most outspoken critic of TV violence and strongest advocate of federal decency standards. Appointed to the FCC by President George Bush in 1990, Duggan is a Democrat who was a White House aide to Lyndon B. Johnson and who actively worked on creating PBS. He is considered fair-minded. Duggan says he wants to settle the long-standing controversy over the network's *alleged* liberal bias, insisting that liberals and conservatives both want the same thing—diversity of opinion and inclusion. However, most people inside PBS consider him a friend with a deep commitment to the institution and some powerful buddies in both Congress and the FCC who could be rough on critics of public broadcasting, especially if they do talk-shows on commercial radio.

Meantime, Public Radio stations are sniffing at talk-show programming. Your tax dollars at work. Most of these stations carry a commercial-free, financial advisor. . . . Bye bye to ABC's Bob Brinker. And there are the two cool mechanic guys. . . . Adios to American Radio's Dr. Dre Bumgartner. This is alternative programming because it uses *commercial broadcaster* taxes to drive *commercial broadcasters* out of business as an alternative—to them. These guys do not forget to pillage before they burn.

Given the realities of competition, the PBS mission is dead, lying on the carpet, twitching. And when they pull the sheet up over its vacant eyes, Disney will buy Big Bird, Fred Rogers, and Barney in a New York minute. One of the Mr. Turners will snap up MacNeil and Lehrer, while A&E and Discovery are already re-running old PBS stuff to large audiences. Big steaming slabs of raw meat will be hacked away by networks who service taxpaying audiences between the ages of three and sixty.

How to stop that? Well, who needs mission if you've got money? Last year, a group of business leaders convened by the nonpartisan Twentieth Century Fund all agreed that PBS needs financial support. So, why not, they asked, have commercial broadcasters and cellular phone companies pay fees for their use of the public airwaves—you know, the way ranchers pay to graze cattle or sheep on public property? Can you imagine business leaders suggesting that they be charged to finance their weakest competitors? These guys at PBS don't want

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an equal contest . . . they don't want a contest. And, by the way, what court ever said that the airwaves are public property? Imagine if government claimed ownership of everything it regulated? Under those assumptions, who owns your car or your home—or, for that matter, you?

Calculated on a dollars-per-bleat basis, it is no surprise that PBS stations surround Biff-and-Muffy begathons with *Yawny in Concert* and whales. If Muffy and Biff are right, and if your neighborhood station is not just draining art dollars away from local musicians, theater, museums, and poets, then ask why Muffy and Biff don't whine only on locally produced PBS shows. Because these people are the Jack Kevorkians of regional arts, sniffing out politically weaker cultural institutions. While you and your children pay for PBS installations and staffs, even Muffy and Biff don't watch the few programs PBS affiliates might genuinely make. This proves once again that taxes aren't raised for the benefit of the taxed.

—Ted Byrne

A *WASHINGTON POST* story earlier this year began, "Gunfire erupted among a group of teenagers in a hallway at Dunbar High School." Here was yet another tale of teenagers and guns in our nation's capital, of shootings at school, of another day when class ended not with the ring of a bell but with the frightening sound of shattering glass and bullets hitting the desks. It is a nightmare that has become all too familiar to families living in what one local columnist calls the District of Calamity.

Yet the shooting itself was less interesting than what the two reporters ingenuously revealed just a few lines later. In fact, few reporters have better described the intractable social pathology destroying the once tightly woven fabric of the inner-city American family: "'We were in a panic; people were running around trying to figure out what was going on,' said 11th grader Tashia Robertson, 17, who was in the chemistry class. . . . [Robertson] quickly went to get her year-old son from the day-care facility in the school . . . 'I was scared for me and my baby,' Robertson said as she left the campus. 'I'm getting out of here.'"

Undeniably, Tashia learned something in school besides how to get pregnant, i.e., the mortal danger of public education in a realm ruled by the likes of Marion Shepilov Barry. But young Tashia's split-second brush with death and her serendipitous comment about her child ought to be more instructive to us than 12 years of school are to her. For one thing, the reporters wrote about Tashia's motherhood, disturbingly enough, as if it were the most normal condition in the world for a teenager, which it is in inner cities. Teenagers and babies and daycare are all part of the quotidian routine at schools in Washington, D.C. Somewhere, presumably, there's time for English and algebra.

But the subtext to the reportage is the more important lesson. Public schools, the one arm of government in which parents must place absolute trust because it has responsibility for their children, have become yet another apparatus of the therapeutic state, a place where every citizen has a problem the government must heal. In the District of Calamity, that is a herculean task, which is why six of every ten residents work for the federal city's government.

If junior doesn't get breakfast, the school will provide one for free. If mom cannot—or will not—pack lunch, that's no problem. The school has a free hot-lunch program. If mom or dad won't be home when the school day ends, daycare is available. The price is right, of course. "It doesn't cost a penny."

Yet if babysitting a generation of bastards is the common denominator to which public schools have been reduced, then it is no surprise that the District's government cannot fulfill its legitimate duties, such as punishing criminals. As Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly's therapists ponder the weighty matters of Norplant and self-esteem, criminals rule the streets, which is precisely why Her Honor called for the National Guard after the homeboys enjoyed one particularly thrilling weekend of mayhem and murder.

The therapeutic state is necessarily a totalitarian state, if only because it does so much of what it should not do and so little of what it should do that it finally must do everything it possibly can do. The condoms don't work, so the schools provide daycare. The antigun laws fail, so the police arbitrarily search law-abiding citizens for them. When darkness creeps over the Potomac, criminals rule the streets, so the mayor declares a curfew to keep everyone inside until a new day dawns.

If so much money weren't wasted and so many lives weren't so tragically ruined, conditions in the nation's capital would be hilarious. They cry out for satirization in a Tom Wolfe novel. The city and its elders, after all, are the apotheosis of everything wrong with late 20th-century urban America. Sad thing is, conditions aren't likely to improve until they get much worse and until the beguiled parents in the District of Calamity take their kids back from the bureaucratic therapists trying to destroy them.

—R. Cort Kirkwood

VIOLENT CRIME in California dropped for the first nine months of 1993 over the same period in 1992, reported attorney general Dan Lungren last winter. But statistics are of no comfort, and Lungren knows it. During the same press conference he even said so: "The reason people are more worried today than they ever have been before is the randomness." Or as pollster Marvin Field told the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "When you have the Polly Klaas cases and the serial killers and the sexual molesters, that kind of crime bursts the bubble of feeling that you can protect yourself." Even in traditionally liberal San Francisco, bleeding hearts are hardening. After the abduction and murder of Klaas by a repeat offender, for instance, a *Chronicle* reporter told me that many of his most liberal newsroom colleagues had been broken and turned by the ordeal of tracking the local tragedy.

Average San Franciscans can likewise only take so much, which became clear after another particularly cold-blooded murder in the heavily touristed Fisherman's Wharf area (just a few months after a teenage Irish tourist was nearly shot dead for no reason in the same area by a 16-year-old out on a weekend pass from a juvenile facility). Michael Stuckey, age 23, suffered a mortal knife wound while trying to break up a mugging. His suspected killer, who has a considerable rap sheet, was arrested in a nearby Bay Street housing project, the one that surrounds a cable car turnaround where tourists, with good reason, wait pensively to be delivered upward to Knob Hill.

Even the televised dramatization of *Tales of the City* has not been enough to divert media and citizen attention away from the streets—no small thing for a city that has a sense of nostalgia that

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can eclipse all else. For instance, facing minimal protest, Mayor Frank Jordan is going through with his "Matrix" program to get certain street people, many of whom can be downright menacing, off the streets.

Meal-ticket civil libertarians and radical clergy have been thrown into a predictable tizzy. But their rallies have failed to draw any significant numbers. One overnight protest in front of City Hall attracted a crowd of only 250, slim pickings for a city with a tradition of drawing throngs for any demonstration demanding "social justice" from City Hall's coffers. The next day's account of the protest in the *Chronicle* spells out why, as the Reverend Robert McAfee Brown of Palo Alto's First Presbyterian Church showed just how divorced from street life some homeless activists are: "We want to make an act of solidarity with homeless people," he said.

But if that's really the case, then, as anyone who works in the City Hall area or has to walk through it can tell you, the Reverend Brown ought to be sipping solidarity from a quart malt liquor bottle or smoking it from a crack pipe only a hundred yards away from City Hall on the steps of the emergency exits from the Civic Auditorium. If the reverend wanted to save souls, this would be an excellent place to start. To get to these homeless he would have to skip over broken bottles, streams of urine, and litter of all kinds, including the occasional soiled condom and used syringe. But by then he might even have second thoughts about Matrix, which links the self-destructive and disoriented to social services and puts criminals with outstanding warrants in jail.

San Franciscans have suffered a compassion breakdown, which is evident by the pathetic anti-Matrix effort—and the amazing tough talk by the city's mainstream media. The usually liberal *San Francisco Examiner*, for instance, sounded downright traditionalist—echoing the Bushian "points of light" voluntarism—in an editorial entitled "Don't Give to Beggars." "Some [on the streets] are hard-luck cases. Some are afflicted with multiple ailments. And some are simply parasites," the editorial read. "No city should have to endure legions of beggars. . . . Give to Glide Memorial. Give to St. Anthony's. Give to St. Martin de Porres. Give to the Salvation Army. . . . Don't give to beggars."

Should it make the streets even remotely more hospitable to the working and tax-paying populace, Matrix may win Jordan, a moderate Democrat suffering from low numbers in popularity polls, a second term. In contrast, former mayor Art Agnos let the homeless have their way, and what aptly came to be known as "Camp Agnos," a homeless Hooverville, sprang up in front of City Hall, causing a long-running national embarrassment to the city. Compared to Agnos's homeless policies, Matrix represents the most responsive government San Francisco has seen in years, even if, as the far-left *San Franciscan Bay Guardian* has reported, "Only about 100 of the more than 7,000 homeless people cited, arrested, or fined since the program began last August have actually been taken off the street."

But absolute numbers don't count. Intent does. Jordan, a career cop, as opposed to Agnos, a career activist and liberal apparatchik (he's now the regional director for HUD!), makes the distinction any average man on the street would: "I separate homeless and street people," he told the *Examiner* in early January. "We should be sympathetic to those who are down and out and need help for a variety of reasons. But there are others who take advantage of all of us, including the homeless."

No doubt some on the streets may have turned to crime or landed there because of hard times—the usual activist jag deceitfully lays *all* blame for the homeless on the "cold-hearted Reagan-Bush years"—but with the second year of the Clinton enlightenment now virtually over, even most bleeding hearts would have to agree that booze, dope, and the dole have more to do with criminality and life on the streets than does the labor market.

Now, sandwiched between random violent crime and streets more desperate than many in the Third World, San Franciscans are proving even liberals can be pushed only so far. Other progressive cities said to be studying Matrix include Portland and Seattle. Can the day be far off when progressives realize good intentions and even more government services aren't enough for a civil society?

—*Jim Christie*

OBITER DICTA: Back in the Midwest, stores in the St. Louis area that carry *Chronicles* include: World News, 4 South Central in Clayton, Missouri; Piece of Mind Books, 230 South Buchanan Street in Edwardsville, Illinois; and B. Dalton Booksellers, D-466 St. Louis Center in the city itself.

Also, we have received a number of complaints from subscribers who have failed to receive one or more issues of *Chronicles*, and we have traced the problem to the Chicago Post Office; Kable News Company, our mailing house, has been sending the issues out as usual. Blame government bureaucracy, blame affirmative action, but please don't blame us. Do let us know, however, if you haven't received an issue, and we will put another copy in the mail for you. (Call our customer service department at 800-877-5459.) We apologize for the inconvenience.

Principalities & Powers

by Samuel Francis

The Abortion Gambit

Trying to be the chief intellectual in the Republican Party is probably a little like trying to be an admiral in the Swiss navy, but in the last year or so, that is more or less what Bill Kristol has become. The son of neoconservative godfather Irving Kristol, young Bill made his bones by billing himself as the brains behind Dan Quayle, when he served as the Vice President's chief of staff in the dark age of the Bush era. With the astute sense for the Main Chance we have come to expect from agents of the neoconservative mafia, Mr. Kristol seemed able to make certain that every news story that said

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anything at all nice about Mr. Quayle (there weren't too many) also made sure the reader knew that it was really Mr. K. who was responsible for the niceness. Even then, Bill had his eyes set on something larger than keeping track of the vice presidential cerebrum.

Alas came 1992, and that something did not materialize. Mr. Kristol, along with the rest of his neo family and friends, found himself in the ranks of the Republican unemployed. But not for long. Suddenly there appeared the largesse of those bottomless pits of tax-exempt funds for neoconservative causes, the Olin and Bradley foundations, and now young Mr. Kristol could once again dine at Tiberio's at least twice a week. The vehicle for his new career was the command of a new entity called the "Project for the Republican Future."

It is largely through adroit manipulation of the PRF and his friends in the Beltway media that Mr. Kristol has placed himself at the center of the GOP nervous system. In the course of the national debate on the Clinton health care scheme, Mr. Kristol emerged as the champion of the opposition to the plan by announcing his now-famous line that "there is no health care crisis." Such sentences pass for ineffable wisdom in the ranks of the Stupid Party, and Mr. Kristol's pearl was endlessly regurgitated by Republicans, rightish talk-show hosts, and Beltway pundits, some of whom even understood what he meant by it. Moreover, in what appears to be an endless series of memoranda recording his remarkably unremarkable thoughts of the day, Mr. Kristol has unbosomed himself of even more astonishing mental jewels, for which Republicans in the House and Senate have scrambled like the children of Mogadishu clambered for American lollipops during our recent expedition in global uplift.

But it was this past summer that Mr. Kristol began to unveil his real agenda, when he sponsored, under the auspices of the PRF, a panel discussion of the subject of abortion and what Republicans should think and say about it. Yet before the smoke had cleared, it seemed that perhaps the young man had blundered.

There is, of course, no mystery as to what the Republican Party "thinks" about abortion. Its position has been part of the official party platform since 1980 and was endorsed repeatedly by both Presidents Reagan and Bush and by Vice President Quayle. That position is that the party is opposed to abortion and commits itself to what is known as the "Human Life Amendment," to wit, from the 1988 GOP platform:

> The unborn child has a fundamental individual right to life which cannot be infringed. We therefore reaffirm our support for a human life amendment to the Constitution, and we endorse legislation to make clear that the Fourteenth Amendment's protections apply to unborn children.

The same plank also commits the party to opposition to public funding for abortion. In 1992, despite some grumbling by a handful of pro-choice Republicans, this position was overwhelmingly endorsed and reaffirmed at the National Convention, and the vast majority of Republicans are perfectly happy with it.

But not Mr. Kristol and his neoconservative colleagues, and it soon became clear that the PRF roundtable on abortion was intended as a first step toward dumping the Human Life Amendment and perhaps the Republican Party's general commitment to a "pro-life" position. The roundtable took place in Washington on June 15 of this year and included, for the "pro-choice" side, Doug Bailey, a liberal Republican who now runs the American Political Network; for the "pro-life" side, the eminent Phyllis Schlafly; and on Mr. Kristol's side, the not-particularly-eminent George Weigel, a Roman Catholic neoconservative who runs a Beltway think tank. Mr. Kristol himself served as moderator.

Yet, strangely for a moderator, though not so strange to those who have studied neoconservatives and their ways, Mr. Kristol and Mr. Weigel issued a joint statement about abortion and what the GOP policy on it should be. Essentially, they advocated the abandonment of the Human Life Amendment, the rescinding of the 1973 Supreme Court decision that invented a "right" to abortion, *Roe* v. *Wade*, and continued opposition to public funding of abortion. In the Kristol-Weigel language, "We support efforts to return to the people their constitutional right to deliberate on this question in their legislatures. We endorse legislative efforts to expand the boundaries of legal protection for the unborn. And we flatly reject the use of public funds, at the state or federal level, to pay for or encourage abortion."

To all of which, say I: pretty damned good for a couple of neocons.

Unlike the Human Life Amendment, the Kristol-Weigel language makes no mention of the deeply flawed 14th Amendment, an illegally passed section of the Constitution that has inflicted untold damage on the Republic and ought to be repealed outright. Unlike the Human Life Amendment, the Kristol-Weigel language endorses and respects the rights of the states and the people of the states to enact laws suitable to their beliefs, customs, and circumstances regarding abortion. And, unlike the Human Life Amendment, the Kristol-Weigel language makes no mention at all of the U.S. Constitution and imports neither theology nor philosophy nor ideology into it. Whatever might be said of Mr. Kristol and his agenda, the language he offered was philosophically sound from the perspective of Old Right political theory.

But the Kristol gambit on abortion did not take place in a political vacuum, and it would be a distortion of the real meaning of the roundtable and the Kristol-Weigel language to fail to understand the context in which it occurred. Within that context, the purpose of the Kristol gambit becomes—insidiously—clear.

That context was the national controversy last summer over the "Christian Right," a controversy in which the Democratic Party (including President Clinton himself), several top-ranking Democrats and their allies among liberal Republicans, left-liberal columnists, and—by what one is certain was merely coincidence—the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith all almost simultaneously joined to denounce the Christian Right as "hatemongers," "bigots," "reactionaries," and, worst of all, people who threatened to defeat liberal Democrats en masse in the forthcoming congressional elections. It was in the midst of this controversy over the Christian Right that the Kristol-Weigel language on Republican abortion policy sprang to life.

Mr. Kristol himself, as well as neoconservative swamis William Bennett and Charles Krauthammer among others, at once marched forth to defend the Christian Right against its enemies, but what was interesting about their expressions of support was that almost all of them defended the religious right by

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downplaying the religious dimension as much as possible, excising the radicalism that derives from that dimension and depicting the movement as simply another adjunct of the conservative (i.e., neoconservative) apparat. Thus, while Mr. Bennett, in the June 26 *Washington Post*, defended the Christian Right's right to take part in politics and the role of religion in informing political affairs, he tried to make out that the religious right is concerned with purely secularist issues—"Things like safe streets, good schools, strong families, nonintrusive government and communities where people care for one another. Good things all. And not, one would think, particularly controversial or 'divisive.'"

Mr. Krauthammer's defense was similar. To him the Christian Right consists of "members of a diverse community sharing a simple if nostalgic agenda returning America to the cultural condition and social values of the immediate postwar era. For them that means two-parent families, schools with authority, limited government, a culture not yet drenched in sex and violence," as well as "government policies that encourage intact families, the teaching of virtue, the encouragement of responsibility and the punishment of criminality." Mr. Kristol's reflections on the religious right, published in the *Washington Times* on June 17 (only two days after the PRF roundtable on abortion) struck a similar theme, namely that the Christian Right is not much more than a coalition of citizens who simply seek the restoration of the manners and institutions of the 1950's and is not at all "out of the mainstream."

What is striking about these neoconservative defenses of the Christian Right, however, is that the issues Mr. Bennett and Mr. Krauthammer mentioned as the movement's characteristic concerns are in fact hardly even blips on its radar screen. The main specific issues of the Christian Right include opposition to abortion, opposition to homosexuality, opposition to the exclusive teaching of evolution and of secular humanism generally, and support for prayer in schools. None of these, in the America of the 1990's, can truthfully be called "mainstream" issues; all of them are in fact radical measures, and all of them seriously challenge the drift of the United States for the last 50 years in their opposition to the country's secularism, its materialism, its libertarianism, and its moral relativism. By ignoring and even denying the implicit radicalism of the Christian Right, by trying to make out that it is really just a "mainstream" movement worried about good schools and safe streets, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Krauthammer, and Mr. Kristol were essentially seeking to strip the Christian Right of its most promising and refreshing radical aspects and to co-opt the movement, seize moral and intellectual leadership of it, and absorb it within the well-funded digestive tract of the neoconservative imperium.

By doing so, Mr. Kristol and his cohorts would win for the neoconservatives what they have never been able to build for themselves—a genuine grass-roots following, and one that in the last couple of years has gained considerable influence in the base of the Republican Party—and at the same time wed the moderate, mainstream, establishment sections of the party to that following, all under their own intellectual (and eventually political) leadership.

That is also what Mr. Kristol was trying to do with his new position on abortion, and that is why he needed Mr. Weigel, who is actually a Christian, to stand up and testify with him. Had Mr. Kristol, who happens to be Jewish, proposed a retreat from the Human Life Amendment by himself, his plan would have been transparent and would have elicited no following among Christian Rightists. But, as his fellow neoconservative and effective press agent Fred Barnes wrote in the *New Republic*, the Kristol-Weigel proposal was received "warmly" by some leaders of the Christian Right, and the proposal is important because "it may allow the GOP to ease its position [on abortion] without an intraparty war. And it would bring the party nearer to the public's view: reduce the number of abortions, but no national ban."

Precisely. The effect, if not the actual mission, of neoconservatism ever since its appearance in the late 1960's has been to muzzle whatever inclinations to an authentic, popular, grass-roots, right-wing radicalism might emerge either within or without the Republican Party. In the early 1970's, as just such a radical movement began to take wing in the wake of the Wallace campaigns, the first generation of neoconservative eggheads showed up and soon ran off with it. The result, when Ronald Reagan entered office in 1981, was an administration never seriously committed to any of the authentically popular and radical issues on which Mr. Reagan had been elected. Now the second generation of neoconservatives has shown up to undertake the same mission of co-optation against the same kind of radicalism of the right that flourishes today. The neoconservative objective is always to "bring the party nearer to the public's view" and never to perform the mission of a real radicalism, to lead and instruct the public or the nation in where it may have gone wrong. The neoconservative objective is always to avoid "intraparty war," to evade combat on the fundamental cultural conflicts that threaten the nation, and to mute any tendencies to radicalism in hope of gaining political office and influence. Those objectives may safely be communicated (indeed they need to be communicated) in the pages of such periodicals as the *New Republic*, but under no circumstances is this esoterica to be imparted to those at the grass-roots level whom it is intended to dazzle.

Hence, even though the position Mr. Kristol and Mr. Weigel deposed in their roundtable may, from the abstract perspective of Old Right political theory, be the correct position, it is, in the perspective of its real meaning, a strategic retreat from the more radical posture the Christian Right has succeeded in implanting in the platform of the Republican Party. Hence, whatever its theoretical merits or even its practical advantages, it is not a position the party should adopt or serious men and women of the right endorse. Its net effect at this time would be the effective compromising or silencing of what is now the only remaining organized expression of a popular radicalism of the right that challenges the dominant regime in anything like a serious way, the effective emasculation of the Christian Right, and the effective take-over of that movement by forces that seek only to thwart rather than to fulfill its radical tendencies. Mr. Barnes may be correct in remarking that some leaders of the Christian Right embraced the Kristol-Weigel position "warmly," but it's doubtful that that has been or will be the response of the rank-and-file of the movement those leaders purport to lead, and once the chief intellectual of the Republican Party perceives that, he may begin to understand why it was that his gambit on abortion was a blunder from which he and his allies may not be able to recover. ◁

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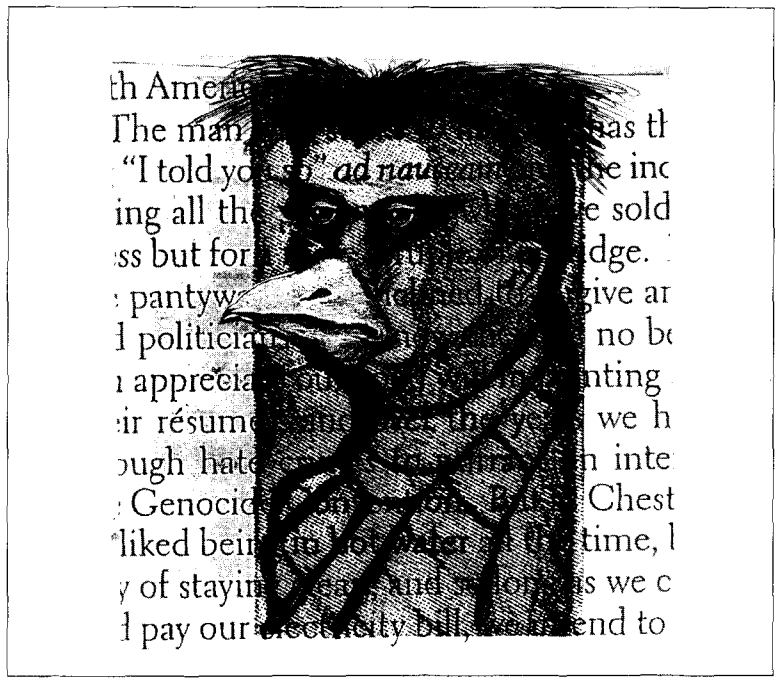

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

A Philanthropic Journalist

by Thomas Fleming

If representative government requires a free press, as the founders of this Republic believed, then it is small wonder that the citizens of the United States no longer enjoy the benefit of free elections. For elections to be free, there must be a choice from among well-defined positions and characters: John Quincy Adams or Andrew Jackson, Lincoln or Douglas (or Breckinridge, for that matter). The degree of choice depends upon the degree of polarity, the sharpness of definition in the positions taken, the clarity of debate. In a small community, gossip and personal experience may be sufficient to inform the people on the respective characters of Cimon and Pericles, although in that case the available information did not prevent the Athenians from making the wrong choice. But in a larger country, governed according to the representative principle, these purposes can only be served by something like a press, and for such a press to do its job, it must consist of antagonists, not impartial observers, because it is only in the crude dialectic of the adversarial press that the sides of a debate or an election can be defined.

No journal or journalist is unprejudiced, but when newspapers used to declare, even advertise their party affiliation, readers were able to discount their partisanship. Today, the problem with America is not that the leftist press is biased—of course it is biased, more so, perhaps, than at any time in our history—but that there is only one set of biases that is represented, and when leftist journalists protest that there is no liberal bias in the media, they may even be halfway sincere, since they have never in their life been exposed to a conservative opinion.

The Anglo-American system has generally been a conflict between two parties which, although they have gone by very many names, have been summed up by Clyde Wilson as the Court Party and the Country Party. The Court Party, since it represents the magnates and those who control the nation's treasury, has never had any trouble in buying itself a press corps of poets laureate and journalists looking for State Department sinecures. The gentlemen of the Country Party, on the other hand, have had to dig into their own pockets to fund journals of opposition and patronize the writers who like nothing better than to stick their fingers into the eyes of arrogant Cabinet ministers, archbishops comfortable in their heterodoxy, and foundation heads grown presumptuous from handing out other people's money.

In different ages the opponents of the Court Party might have stood in the ranks of the gentlemen who opposed the tyranny of Elizabeth I and her more moderate successors, or with Samuel Johnson and the defenders of King and Church against the Whig magnates. More typically, they may find themselves at different times in both camps, like Halifax the Trimmer, who always moved into opposition as soon as his own faction came to power. It was Halifax who said that "the best party is a kind of conspiracy against the nation" and compared the party spirit to faith without works: "They take it for a dispensation from all other duties." William Cobbett began life as a peasant radical and turned Tory without compromising his principles, and there is no more exemplary model for the modern reactionary radical than "Peter Porcupine," a true populist who, when like so many down-at-heels English journalists he came to America, stood up to the Jacobin press of Benjamin Franklin

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Bache. Cobbett's modest ambition to leave his country no worse than he found it is the political equivalent of the Hippocratic injunction to do no harm.

Adversarial journalism has had a long history in Britain and America, and some of the best of it has been reactionary: the essays of Swift, Johnson, and Coleridge; and in America, the newspaper and magazine pieces of Mencken, Nock, and John T. Flynn, who had the honor of being repudiated by his liberal friends at the *New Republic* and rebuffed by the "New Conservatives" of Mr. Buckley's magazine.

Today there is virtually no opposition press of any substance in the United States. The so-called left consists of salaried apologists for the regime and whose only complaint is that the New Deal state has not yet absorbed every drop of private energy and every moment of private life. At the *Nation*, which passes for a radical publication, the editors sit around debating the wisdom of opposing Clinton with the same degree of servitude displayed by conservatives in the Reagan-Bush years. For anything like reckless candor, the *Nation* has had to import two Englishmen, whose freedom consists in fulfilling Kris Kristofferson's definition of having "nothing left to lose," although the most radical remarks are still provided by the expatriate reactionary Gore Vidal. But on the right, the token opposition is represented by Clinton-bashers who can criticize the mote in Bill's eye but not the beam in the eyes of Reagan and Bush, Kemp and Bennett.

"There you go again," some of the magazine's kindest friends and most generous supporters will say, "going easy on the likes of Gore Vidal, while attacking good conservative Republicans." It is as an answer to these friends that my remarks are addressed. My first observation would be that I have never claimed to be a Republican, good or otherwise. If I ever had a party, it was the party of Jefferson and Calhoun, Douglas and Bryan, Burton Wheeler and the Dixiecrats, and if there is anyone in the Senate I can at all admire, it is a senator of unblemished patriotism who opposed the Gulf War, a welfare-state liberal who proposed the first balanced budget bill, the Democrat with the most conservative voting record in the Senate even according to the skewed criteria of the American Conservative Union. I mean, of course, Fritz Hollings, who would probably rather not be praised in our pages. In saying that I admire Senator Hollings, I do not say that I necessarily agree with the political views reflected in his voting record, but that I honor him as a public man who has managed both to serve his constituents and to stick to his own guns. Of how many congressmen can either be said?

"Then what are you loyal to?" I have never claimed to speak for anyone but myself, but in this case I think it is permissible to speak of a We, consisting of my editorial colleagues, some regular contributors, and a significant body of faithful readers. For all our disagreements—religious, aesthetic, and political—most of us agree, first and foremost, that there is such a thing as truth, that some ideas can be tested, proved or disproved, and that not to tell the truth is the cardinal sin of the intellectual. "Not telling the truth" is not limited to deliberate lies, because one may know the truth and merely avoid telling it, out of cowardice or exaggerated prudence. It is possible to lie half-unknowingly, as when scholars or journalists prefer to accept fashionable opinion on such subjects as Bosnia or the *Dred Scott* decision without troubling to study the question seriously. Christians who compare *Roe* v. *Wade* with *Dred Scott* and journalists who speak of Serbian war crimes in Sarajevo or the destruction of Dubrovnik are lying, whether they know it or not, because they are too lazy to redress their ignorance.

Our first job here, then, is to try to tell the truth, which means we cannot afford the easy-going contempt for history and foreign languages displayed by the editors of the *New Republic*. We are not perfect in this or any other respect; we do not come even close to realizing our own desire for accuracy, but this is a degenerate age, and none of us can escape the sin of *acedia*.

Journalists and politicians who know they are no better than prostitutes can appreciate our good will in painting scarlet letters all over their résumés, and over the years we have been accused of enough hate crimes to warrant an international trial under the Genocide Convention.

Our second firm belief is that truth does not change from age to age and that despite variations in custom and culture principles of right and wrong, discovered by ancient Jews and Greeks and handed down to us by our ancestors, are as true today as when they were codified in the Decalogue or analyzed in the *Nicomachean Ethics* or declared by Jesus Christ. We are not about to change our minds on such questions as divorce, abortion, social security, homosexual rights, or the terror-bombing of Iraqi civilians, simply because some unlettered social scientist or mercenary journalist or bribed think-tank president gives us a new dispensation. The heavy weight of human experience is pressing down upon our shoulders, and if we were to shift the burden, we should be crushed, morally. With Martin Luther we must say: "Here I stand. I can do no other."

We are, first and foremost, on the right because we are *of* the right and believe we are *in* the right. To be on the right today must mean what it has always meant: an unyielding opposition to the principles of the French (and the lesser Russian) Revolution and a staunch defense of our residuum of a civilization that is both classical and Christian.

If neither the principles of Holy Scripture nor the languages and cultures of Greece and Rome (and their European successors) interest you, then you are reading the wrong magazine. If your only interest in our culture is that it belongs to white people, go subscribe to *Instauration*, and if you think that complex social questions can be boiled down to a few mathematical formulas of individual rights or plotted on a balance sheet, then you should be reading any of the mass of publications professing faith in free markets and closed minds. Ideologues should not so much as look at *Chronicles*, because it

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could only confuse them.

To defend an entire civilization is a task too imposing even for our self-conceit, and we have limited our primary sphere of activity to "American culture," which we do not construe according to any exceptionalist or Whitmanesque formula. Our American cultures only make sense as regional and provincial variations on some very ancient themes, but since this is where and when we are, we are determined to defend and discuss the particularities of American life with as much zeal as if we were pagan Romans trying to restore the altar of victory removed by triumphalist Christians.

One important part of our particular tradition is a suspicion of elite classes and a faith in the good heart and common sense of ordinary people. The principles of federalism and subsidiarity are universal and can be seen at work in every great civilization, but in the American context they have taken on specifically Jeffersonian forms. Individual liberty, household autonomy, states' rights, and nonintervention in the affairs and wars of other nations—these are the best American principles we know, and to be a conservative American should mean a commitment to the restoration of the American order established by our ancestors and defended by Adams and Jefferson alike.

If the Conservative Movement or the Republican Party will stand with us in defending our birthright, we are their allies, but if they continue to expand the welfare state, call for drug wars that violate the sanctity of private property, and send American troops all over the globe like so many Janet Renos—social therapists armed with tanks and poison gas—then we say that George Wallace's "dime's worth of difference" has suffered from inflation.

"What hopeless idealists you are. Your futility is as charming as your vanity is offensive. Because the world is not to your taste, you refuse to cooperate with any practical plans that might improve the economy or limit the damage being inflicted by the left." This is the most serious charge of all, but is it really so damaging? A small magazine cannot influence, much less carry, an election. We have no lavish foundation grants with which to bribe discredited Cabinet officials or lure celebrity professors whose falling academic stock or disordered personality makes them vulnerable to conservative blandishments, and if we signed onto the latest conservative manifesto and had our ticket punched on the way into "The Big Tent" to watch the one-ring circus, where the entertainment consists entirely of pitchmen hawking political vegematics and Ginsu knives, our presence would contribute exactly nothing.

In electoral strength, *Chronicles* is on par with *Commentary*, which is to say nowhere, although our themes unquestionably are resonating with that vast minority which might still threaten to overthrow the regime, which is why we can still scare the pants off the more thoughtful representatives of both parties. What we can hope to accomplish, by sticking to our guns, is to ensure that certain ground will not be given up without a fight. When, seven or eight years ago, we started to discuss the question of immigration, *Chronicles* was alone among conservative publications, except for the book section of *National Review* where Chilton Williamson and his friends were, for a time, holding the fort against the Republican one-worlders. Several well-wishers in those days advised me to give it up. After all, our "Nation of Immigrants" issue precipitated the biggest split in conservative history and provoked *National Review* to threaten to "excrete" us from the movement. (NR staffers have always said it was Bill Buckley, but he, characteristically, was careful not to leave his fingerprints on the blade he stuck in our back.) These days, *National Review* and its sensible (albeit English) editor have brought his magazine over to our side, for which we are pleased and grateful. The most recent sign of NR's return to the paths of righteousness is an article on Jack Kemp written by David Frum, a Canadian fifth columnist at the *Wall Street Journal*. Unfortunately Frum, a typical specimen of the *soi-disant* conservative, has carried his reverence for Martin Luther King to the point of imitating his style, and his article is "voice-merged" from what Jeff Tucker has written in *Chronicles*.

But immigration and Jack Kemp's *gauchisme* are only two out of a large number of questions that we either raised for the first time or opened for discussion. The ethnic and regional conflicts, which almost ten years ago we were discussing, are now front-page news even in the *New York Times*. We were published in a piece entitled "Tears for Bosnia" several years before the breakup of Yugoslavia. We were the first Americans to talk about the Lega Nord and had the first American interview with Umberto Bossi. We were the first to combine the issues of trade, immigration, and foreign policy into a program of America First, just as *Chronicles* was the first publication of any kind to reassess the original America First Committee. National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* interviewed most of the contributors to our December 1991 issue without acknowledging the source. We don't mind, though, because we are used to it.

These are the kinds of things an "obscure" magazine *can* do, if it is left free to follow its nose and sniff out significance, like pigs looking for truffles. "Well, why can't you be content to be original, without being so cantankerous?" The most obvious answer is that we have a character defect that prevents us from lying and equivocating in one place in order to tell the truth in another. Candor is an infectious disease, and once it gets going it eats up every drop of common sense.

A more practical answer is that it is our job to be tough, particularly on those who presume to call themselves conservatives or right-wingers. This is not to say that we do not believe in compromise or that we have not trimmed our sails or damped our criticisms of faithful friends and fellow travelers. Compromise is a necessary part of statecraft, but the statesman, as opposed to the politician, has a vision of the nation and has his sights on long-term objectives. Along the way, he must be free to tack back and forth as he tries to catch the wind, which may not always be blowing in his direction. The politician, on the other hand, is in love with compromise as an instrument to power. He will make deals with anyone who serves his ultimate purpose—of getting and staying elected—and will betray his constituents and followers with the same alacrity as Republicans are displaying in their rush to repudiate the life issue.

When our friends ask us to moderate our criticisms and to compromise our ideals, they are asking for the politician's rather than the statesman's compromise. But we are mere scribblers and sit in no seats of power. What possible good, apart from securing millions in foundation grants, could be accomplished by a policy of compromise? At some point in the information and opinion chain, someone has to stand for something better than the *libido dominandi*, and since no one else seems to be willing to take it on, that task falls to us.

If a statesman is willing to embrace some part of our vision,

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we expect him to make a series of compromises in the service of our shared ideals, and if he is unwilling to bend, he should find some other line of work. But if the compromising begins at our level, at the level of what our friend Mel Bradford used to call the higher journalism, then the statesman is left without a vision and the mere politician has not even the figleaf of ideology to conceal his greed and ambition. If we say no to all government health insurance, including the Medicare and Medicaid we already have, then it is conceivable that some young congressman of principle will hold out against the Clinton plan and, as evidence accumulates of all the failed national health systems in Europe, a movement might even take shape, successful enough to attract the stupid opportunists who are the vast majority in both parties and all factions. But if conservatives are willing to support the Republicans' moderate alternative to the Clinton plan, then they not only forfeit all right to criticize the compromise plan that is eventually adopted, but they will have to shut up and watch their moderate compromise radicalized by federal court decisions and subsequent congressional revisions. If anyone doubts this, he need only consult the history of civil rights legislation since 1964. The only proper conservative position in 1964 was unqualified opposition, and we are forced to live every day with the results of Republican moderation. "A plague on both their houses," exclaimed John Llewellyn Lewis, when he realized the worth of both American parties.

The man who sticks to his guns has the satisfaction of saying "I told you so" *ad nauseam* and the indescribable joy of ridiculing all the pantywaists who have sold their souls not for a mess but for a mere scruple of porridge. It cannot be said that the pantywaists are inclined to forgive and forget. Journalists and politicians who know they are no better than prostitutes can appreciate our good will in painting scarlet letters all over their résumés, and over the years we have been accused of enough hate crimes to warrant an international trial under the Genocide Convention. But as Chesterton once observed, he liked being in hot water all the time, because it was a good way of staying clean, and so long as we can afford to buy soap and pay our electricity bill, we intend to stay in hot water.

The Journalist of Reputation

by William Baer

Who cares about his active crotch,
the opium, the quarts of scotch,
compulsive lies (a small faux pas),
the Satan rites, menage à trois,
deserted mistress, abandoned son,
and all the other bits of fun?
Let's give this prince of blackest lies
the *Times* first page and the Pulitzer Prize.

He'd seen the corpses in the street
rotting in the summer heat,
but what's a couple million dead?
it's best to leave the thing unsaid.
He had his girls, and perks, and booze,
and never put it in the news,
He liked the tyrant and his "ism,"
and "tough," "committed" journalism.

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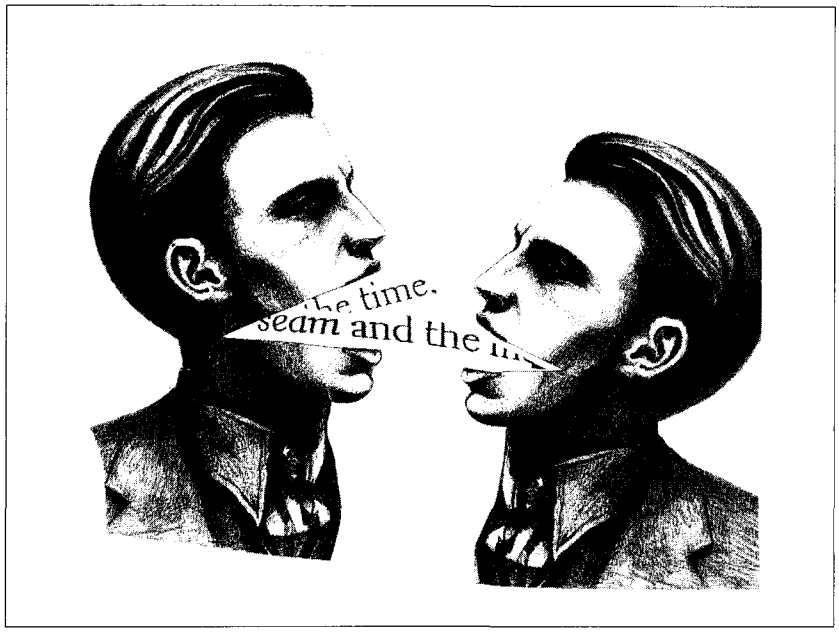
Speaking Truth to Power

by Philip Jenkins



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Why is there no adversarial press in the United States? Why do the media seem so afraid of news stories that threaten to embarrass or destroy governments? These questions may seem curious in a society that prides itself on freedom of the press and where the media are often criticized for excessively negative criticism of public figures. Did not the newspapers bring down a President in our lifetime? But the Woodward-Bernstein mythos should not give us the illusion that the media act as an effective check on power. It is not that the American press is not free: it is just so timid, so anxious to avoid breaking a rather narrow consensus. Whether the story concerns international terrorism or drug smuggling, intelligence scandals or law enforcement disasters, the media have an overwhelming tendency to believe the official position, even when the contrary evidence mounts dramatically. Even worse, the media in such cases spend more time seeking to discredit government critics ("conspiracy theorists" and "paranoia" are rhetorically useful terms) than they do examining the substantial holes poked in official accounts. In a large and increasing area of matters affecting intelligence, law enforcement, and national security, the American media are no more adversarial or critical than those of a traditional People's Democracy. If the goal of good journalism is speaking truth to power, then the press has a serious case of laryngitis.

Let us take one specific example. Between 1985 and 1988, literally hundreds of accounts suggested that the American-backed Contra forces in Nicaragua were involved in drug trafficking, mostly in the form of huge quantities of cocaine imported into the United States. The specific charges were quite well substantiated in the form of criminal trials for narcotics and gun-running, both in the United States and in Central American nations. There were stories that at least part of this trade was being accomplished with the acquiescence or active assistance of American authorities, while related tales described murders, bribery, and political cover-ups involving high levels of the federal government, including the White House and the National Security Council. American intelligence agencies had reportedly mobilized support for the Contras at the state and local levels, and black money was rumored to have passed through various Savings and Loans and reelection committees. Arkansas was one conspicuous example, under its then Governor Clinton. All these allegations were at the time available in print, in relatively obscure left-wing papers like *In These Times* or *Mother Jones* and in books by Jonathan Kwitny, Leslie Cockburn, and others. In the mainstream media, however, the Contra-drug connection was virtually never mentioned except occasionally to be denied as "one of the harebrained rumors making the rounds," "conspiracy mongering," and so on. With a handful of exceptions, this was the solid attitude of

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all the major metropolitan papers, including the dual voices of God, the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*; of the Siamese twins, *Time* and *Newsweek*; and of each member of the airwave trinity, ABC, CBS, and NBC. There was quite ferocious competition to see who could say the least about Contras and drugs.

Why was the story not covered? It seemed to have everything required for the perfect scandal, including blatant wrongdoing by highly placed officials, the high drama of international intrigue, and endless conspiratorial connections, while the drug element provided instant proof that the conspirators were actually doing something harmful and dangerous, in contrast to burgling a Washington hotel. Had "Contragate" developed, there were surely Pulitzers aplenty to be won, so why the restraint? The optimistic answer is that the editors and television news directors rigorously explored the allegations, found them to be inaccurate (every individual charge), and felt it would be irresponsible to publicize a story not absolutely founded upon factual bedrock. The scholarly rigor of a classicist refusing to publish a text until verifying every last rescension, every mutant reading, would be as nothing compared to the determination of such men and women to prevent even the shadow of a falsehood into their pages or news broadcasts. And how much more amazing to find such standards shared by *every* responsible news organ, so that no one paper was sufficiently cynical or self-seeking to bolt the pack and publish an unsupported charge.

Obviously this was not the case, just as it does not reflect the media's handling of commonplace social threats and problems. The media clearly do not apply the merest fraction of this journalistic rigor before going ahead with scare stories about alleged new cancer dangers, about new figures on child abuse or domestic violence, about ritual-abuse gangs organized in every kindergarten and play school. They play the story, no matter how obvious the internal contradictions and blatant falsehoods, and let it run until the public shows signs of boredom. How else to explain the rich social mythology of the 1980's, recounted endlessly in every news program and paper, including the most "responsible"? How else to explain the million and a half missing children (which in some accounts is the number of children vanishing each year, which means that every American child is now missing)? How else to account for the 50 or 80 percent of American women who are allegedly raped during their lifetime? The 50,000 victims of satanic human sacrifice each year? The fact that one American homicide out of every four is committed by a sexually motivated serial killer? The continuing dissemination of the ludicrous and disproven figure that one out of every ten men is homosexual? Or, to take one notorious example of recent years, what perversion of critical standards allowed virtually all the media to run unchecked the claims about the discovery of cold fusion? When conspicuously not describing the criminal lifestyles of the rich and powerful, the media seem quite prepared to indulge in the three forms of journalistic wash: eyewash, whitewash, and hogwash.

I tend to accept that there was at least a factual basis to the charges about the Contras and drugs, while I do not believe the literal truth of many other equally explosive stories that have been circulating over the last decade or so, but which were spiked with equal alacrity by the news media. For example, the Washington rumor mill of the late 1980's made great play of the "October Surprise," the allegation that Republican Party officials made a clandestine deal with the Iranian government in 1980 to delay the release of American hostages until after the inauguration of President Reagan. In some versions, George Bush was personally implicated in such a near-treasonous arrangement. The charges were eventually investigated by Congress, which dug through large mounds of disinformation and fantasy to determine that the story was spurious, and this conclusion seems probable. However, it was widely supported (a hundred times more so than, say, the homicidal devil cults or child-abduction stories) and certainly offered the several unrelated sources of confirmation demanded by traditional journalistic ethics, and yet it remained essentially uncovered by the mainstream media for several years after it first surfaced. Once again, was this not newsworthy?

Perhaps the best recent example concerns the sudden death of Vincent Foster, which to the untrained eye initially looked much like the assassination of an inconvenient public official, in best Banana Republic style. There may indeed have been no foul play, but it certainly seemed to merit the efforts of a decent investigative reporter. If the incident had occurred in Rome or Buenos Aires, there would probably have been amused head-shaking over the rapidly reached public consensus that this was nothing more than a private tragedy and possibly even scandalized comments on the docility of the local free media. And if the mysterious quietus was investigated by an "objective" gumshoe with indirect ties to the very politicians under suspicion, how swiftly American media would have denounced the local cartels that tied politicos, bankers, police, and media magnates. As the Victorian lady commented when watching the hysterical suicide at the end of *Cleopatra*: "How very unlike the home life of our own dear queen!" Or more biblically: "Lord, I thank you that I am not as yonder publican. . . ."

Just from the experience of the last decade, let us look at some of the other roads not taken by the media, some of the potentially major stories that were effectively buried (which is not to say that all or any of them were necessarily factual). We might cite America's role in the war in Afghanistan, where the anti-Soviet rebels largely paid for their military endeavors in opium poppy that was transformed into heroin, thus creating the potential for another drugs/intelligence scandal. There were at least the seeds of scandal lying dormant in the record of American relations with Colonel Qaddafi, who appears to have been systematically armed and equipped over the years by the intelligence services of the United States and other Western nations. For what purpose and with what consequences? What about American reporting of terrorism through the 1980's, when virtually every news story on the international dimension portrayed the misdeeds of those three international stooges: Libya, Iran, and Syria? At the time, virtually every European commentator on Middle Eastern terrorism knew that the key players included at least two equal or larger players in the form of Iraq and Algeria, yet their roles are unmentioned in all the "expert commentary" of these years. Iraq, especially, has almost certainly had a hand in virtually every act of the so-called "Abu Nidal" group since its inception in 1976, and outside the United States there is real skepticism if this organization even exists except as an arm of Iraqi intelligence. In every case, the media acted in concert to conceal or ignore stories that were embarrassing to the United States government or intelligence services. Iraq, for example, was throughout the

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1980's a staunch American ally and could not be depicted as a terrorist sponsor state, while the Afghanistan adventure enjoyed bipartisan support as the crucial campaign in destabilizing the Evil Empire.

The virtue of international news is that editors and news managers can claim with some plausibility that nobody either knows or cares. There are still millions of Americans who think that the Gulf War of 1991 was fought against Iran, and who would not sincerely care if it was pointed out that their mistake involved anything more than a spelling error, so why does it matter that Iraq rather than Libya or Iran deserves the prestige of a terrorist mastermind? Of course, the basic problem with lies is that they tend to require buttressing by more falsehoods in the future, and the consequence is a house of lies that grows ever larger and more unstable until it eventually collapses under its own weight. In the case of the Middle Eastern scandals, the delicate structure probably collapsed in February 1993 when a group of American-trained Afghan veterans and (probably) Iraqi secret service agents planted a large and potentially catastrophic bomb at New York's World Trade Center, leaving the American media to discover overnight some of the major intelligence and terrorism stories they had been sitting on for the last decade.

In a large and increasing area of matters affecting intelligence, law enforcement, and national security, the American media are no more adversarial or critical than those of a traditional People's Democracy. If the goal of good journalism is speaking truth to power, then the press has a serious case of laryngitis.

So why did the media behave as they did, why did the consensus remain undented? Simplistic conspiracy views should be discarded immediately. Contrary to some of the allegations made following Watergate and the assassination investigations of the 1970's, there is no central agency issuing *diktats* as to what can or cannot be uncovered, no Ministry of Truth examining stories for doubleplus ungood statements. Nor does the selective silence indicate any particular party bias, and it is just as easy to claim plausibly that the media are militant supporters of either Republican or Democratic administrations. The consensus arises because in political and intelligence matters especially, the government role in the supply and manipulation of information has in practice created a system of self-censorship, which in some ways is just as effective as any Ministry of Truth. The media are desperately anxious to avoid losing the regular source of information on the political, diplomatic, or intelligence affairs that make up the bulk of their news coverage, and they are certainly not prepared to risk this bread and butter in order to hare after what may prove to be a speculative fiction.

Journalists and political correspondents are as lazy as the rest of us and tend to rely on a quite narrow band of informed sources, who inevitably tend to recite a narrow party line. In international matters at least, they show little evidence of any independent knowledge that would allow them to verify or contradict what they are told by the usual suspects—the familiar American and Israeli spooks, backed up by the two or three well-known Washington think tanks. The closer an investigation gets to "real" national security interests or intelligence dirt, the more likely it is that the sources will close ranks and state absolutely and positively that there is no truth to the said ludicrous stories about Afghans and Contras, Libyans and Iraqis. And these arguments can be backed up with quite dire warnings. If you follow up this story, you will find that Iraqis bombed New York, which means that the President will have no choice but to launch a new Gulf War. Is that what you want? If you print this, you will endanger unnamed intelligence assets: people could die as a result of this story. The patriotic card can be very powerful, no matter how dubious the evidence that permits it to be played and how little skepticism the journalist demonstrates before accepting it.

These examples concern foreign policy and intelligence, but much the same arguments apply to domestic law enforcement, where the enormous growth of federal policy agencies has tended to concentrate in a few hands the information that matters, the inside stories on which the media depend. This was traditionally a game played to perfection by the FBI, but more recently the antidrug bureaucracies have become the leading players, and their success is indicated by the degree to which alternatives to the ongoing drug war have become virtually unthinkable: keep pouring in the resources. The approach is something like this: We are not going to tell you what to write, but if you do run that hostile story, there will be no more cooperation from us, no more opportunities to be present at the arrest of the spy or the trafficker, no access to notorious Prisoner X, no chances to photograph the secret training of elite antidrug commandos. Go out on a limb, and you will get one magnificent story, but you will pay for years to come. You can continue to report, but it will be much more difficult to find even the basic information and photo opportunities. It is your decision—after all, this is a free press. The media consensus thus results not from censorship but from the interplay of bureaucratic convenience with journalistic laziness.

There never was a golden age of American reporting, in which legions of heroic, hard-bitten journalists regularly demonstrated selfless devotion to digging out the truth about City Hall, regardless of consequences. In 1890 or 1920, just like today, such individuals were outnumbered by the timeservers and foot soldiers of the media corporations. What has changed is that government is bigger, while the corporations have swollen into multi-enterprise conglomerates. The much-vaunted information explosion has thus coincided with the increased power of central government to channel major news about the state and its functions and to define whether a story is "respectable" or merely "paranoid": in effect, to grant a license for investigation and discussion. The scope for serious reporting is similarly limited by the commercial factors,

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which means that a newspaper or television news division is one component of a chain of business ventures that may also include fast food and computers, sports teams and book publishing. These connections cannot fail to constrain the investigative ambitions of editors or journalists, who fall under enormous pressures to exhibit corporate loyalty. Few administrations or city governments would be so stupid as to penalize a paper directly for an offensive investigation, but there are a hundred ways of striking at a parent or related company in the broader corporate family, the *keiretsu* circle.

In the last decade, complaints about the media have often focused on the figure of Rupert Murdoch, "Citizen Cain," who has been blamed for virtually every lapse of taste and editorial judgment in any newspaper or television program. The criticism is often exaggerated, and it is humorous to see Murdoch described as an interloper in what (it sometimes appears) the Constitution presumably intended to be solely a three-ring circle of television networks: two generations of successful greed can give an enterprise staggering pretensions, to say nothing of delusions of invulnerability. But the Murdoch empire has enjoyed staggering growth worldwide. In America alone, this includes a host of newspapers, from the *Chicago Sun-Times* and the *San Antonio Express-News* to the *Star*; Fox Broadcasting and a national television network with almost 200 affiliates; major shares in Harper & Row and *TV Guide*; and satellite and cable networks. All this in addition to growing ventures on every continent except Africa.

In terms of news, the Murdoch presence has been blamed for a precipitous decline in journalistic standards and the rise of unashamedly sensationalistic reporting. This tendency could be illustrated by a hundred news headlines, but two nice examples would be "Werewolf Seized in Southend," a front-page banner from the *Sun*, Britain's best-selling daily; and "Headless Body Found in Topless Bar," a relatively mild contribution from the *New York Post*. Again, this is somewhat unfair in that all the television networks share some blame for the drift to tabloid standards, and Murdoch's enterprises can scarcely be blamed for the talk shows and trash television that provide news and social commentary for so large a majority of the American people. Murdoch is less important as an individual culprit than as a powerful symbol of the thorough transformation of news into entertainment, the necessary corollary of the failure of the media to provide effective or substantial analysis of politics and the state. Nor can *USA Today* be attacked for its valiant efforts to reduce any story to the visual equivalent of a 30-second sound-bite. Like Murdoch, it is reflecting the conditions of a profoundly nonideological age, when most people have come to believe that the doings of the state are so far-removed from anything they can understand, still less control, that it is pointless making the effort.

There are adversarial media in this country, on both the left and the right, and across the spectra of sexual and religious preference, and some of them do a quite heroic job, but their influence is heavily circumscribed. For what we still describe as the mainstream, however, the most likely fate is what we might call a British solution. In the Britain of the 1980's, the Murdoch press led the way toward a thorough exclusion of serious news from the press, on the reasonable grounds that investigative reporting tended to annoy the government and the courts, while huge amounts of money were to be made in page-three nudes and silly headlines: "Werewolf Seized in Southend," "Rape Hell in Satan's Coven." After all, that's entertainment. It may also be our future. c

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Obituary in the *New York Times*

by William Baer

Today I read the notice of a death
buried deep within the *New York Times*.
Concise and brief, just 87 words,
it read, I knew, *exactly* like my own.
Some unknown man, my age, who'd died of cancer—
and I wondered if his children ever called,
and if his late divorce had left the woman
as bitter and unforgiving as my first wife.

I wondered if his "freedom" was empty and cold,
and if he had more wealth than he could need—
and if he had sometime, just recently,
discovered that most all of what he'd said
and thought, throughout his life, was totally wrong.
And as I feel the cancer surge within,
I wonder if the same kind took him down.

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Mass Media, Mass Conformity

by Erwin Knoll

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

I take a certain amount of gleeful satisfaction—the Germans call it *Schadenfreude*—in the schisms and divisions that seem increasingly to bedevil the American right. The pitched battles between neoconservatives and paleoconservatives, between libertarians and authoritarians, and, of late, between social conservatives of the fundamentalist Christian persuasion and traditional economic royalists who care much more about unearned income than about unborn infants—all of these squabbles suggest that the American right, which seemed to be giddily on the ascendant only a decade or so ago, has a long way to go before it can establish the ideological hegemony it so passionately craves. And, from my perspective, that is a very good thing.

But my almost obsessive interest in the nasty family feuds reported by sundry right-wing publications suggests that there is one deeply held conviction, one fundamental assumption, one bedrock principle to which every conservative faction and subset subscribes: the notion that America's most grievous problems are caused, or at least seriously exacerbated, by the mass media, which are mysteriously but intractably biased in favor of the left.

I, too, believe that the mass media bear a considerable burden of responsibility for what ails America, but I am at a loss to comprehend how anyone could possibly place them on the left of the political spectrum. I wish at least some of them were, so that our society could experience the benefits of genuinely adversarial journalism. I wish there were mass-circulation daily newspapers, or weekly news magazines, or television networks, or commercial radio stations that brought to their news coverage the kind of antiestablishment insight that informs the struggling, small-circulation publications of the American left—the *Nation*, *The Progressive*, *In These Times*, *Mother Jones*. I wish the many millions of Americans who glance at morning newspapers or doze off while watching the evening news had an occasional opportunity to be exposed to an alternative viewpoint that challenges the fundamental assumptions of Washington's often-benighted foreign policy or of the profit-driven market system. But that is decidedly not the case.

If there ever was a time when real debate on fundamental ideological questions was fostered and stimulated by the mass media in our country, it ended with the advent of the Cold War. The exigencies of the nuclear age, the perils of America's confrontation with Soviet communism, made it imperative, we were told, that "politics stop at the water's edge." This put foreign and military policy—literally matters of life and death—beyond the pale. Critical media scrutiny was verboten, and public debate, when it existed at all, was inevitably uninformed and invariably unwelcome. And the media, which often engage in lofty flights of rhetoric about their devotion to the First Amendment, eagerly embraced this drastic limitation not only on their freedom but on their essential function. They became devoted and obedient servants of the official line—as obedient as their counterparts in the communist camp, who at least made no pretense of independence.

Let me illustrate first with a personal experience that marked the beginning of my understanding of the realities of American journalism. It was the spring of 1960, and I was a young reporter on the local news staff of the *Washington Post*. Across the world, the Russians had just shot down an American U-2 spy

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plane, a feat that seriously damaged U.S.-Soviet relations at a time when they seemed to be on the mend. President Eisenhower tried at first to fob the incident off as the case of an unfortunate weather-reconnaissance aircraft that had gone astray, but he was compelled to admit the truth when it turned out that the Russians had captured the U-2 pilot, Francis Gary Powers. I believe the modern loss of credibility of the American presidency dates from that event.

That evening, riding down from the *Post's* fifth-floor newsroom, I found myself sharing the elevator with one of the paper's senior editors. Seizing an opportunity to make conversation with a newsroom personage I rarely got to meet, I said something like, "That was quite a story today about the spy plane, wasn't it?" "Yes," he replied. "We've known about those flights for some time, but we were asked not to say anything."

In my youthful innocence, I was astonished. Could it be that this great newspaper I worked for—this great *liberal* newspaper I worked for—would come into possession of a news story of major significance but suppress it because some *they* asked us not to publish it? I subsequently learned, of course, that the *Washington Post*, like other significant national media, had editors who were designated to maintain liaison with the CIA, the FBI, and—if need be—other national security agencies to receive briefings and guidance on sensitive stories.

One evening, while working on the *Post*'s foreign desk, I was cautioned about the handling of another story then in the news: an American pilot had been captured by the government of Indonesia's President Sukarno while flying for anti-Sukarno insurgents. Sukarno charged that the pilot was employed by the CIA; our government insisted—and the *Post* dutifully reported—that he was a soldier of fortune freelancing for the Indonesian rebels. As the newspaper's foreign editor left for the evening, he instructed me, "Be careful with any wire-service copy about that pilot in Indonesia; he's CIA, you know."

Some years ago, when the *New York Times* had invested a great deal of time, effort, and expense in compiling an investigative series on the misdeeds and misadventures of the CIA, it circulated the finished articles among senior members of the U.S. national security establishment to make sure all the news would be fit to print.

As editor of *The Progressive*, I encounter instances every month where the mainstream media, in their eagerness to protect the status quo (or worse), have distorted or suppressed stories in pursuit of a political agenda that can only be characterized as slavish devotion to conservative causes and values. In fact, counteracting that sort of deception and suppression is the raison d'être of our magazine. A couple of examples.

In the September 1982 issue of *The Progressive*, the cover story by contributing editor Samuel H. Day, Jr., was called "The Afrikaner Bomb," and it began this way: "South Africa has its own atomic bomb. It was conceived in the mid-1970s as an ace-in-the-hole to ensure survival of Pretoria's beleaguered white-minority regime. It was built in utmost secrecy by a scientific-industrial establishment which, like those of other advanced industrial nations, has long had the potential to produce nuclear weapons. The successful test of that weapon made South Africa the seventh nation to detonate a nuclear device and the first since the U.S. test at Alamagordo to have done so without immediate public acknowledgment. Despite widespread international suspicion about South Africa's nuclear intentions, the impact of its entry into the nuclear weapons club has been obscured by uncertainties about the facts—doubts that have been sedulously fostered by the Pretoria government in tacit cooperation with the United States." Sam Day had spent seven weeks in South Africa conducting research for his article. He was a former editor of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. We assumed that his carefully documented findings would get the media attention they deserved. We sent out news releases and copies of *The Progressive*, but they fell into a bottomless pit of media silence; our news was not officially sanctioned. The South African apartheid government's denials had more credibility with the mass media than *The Progressive's* facts.

In March 1993, as the apartheid regime was on the verge of dissolution, President F.W. de Klerk acknowledged that South Africa had begun building a nuclear arsenal in 1977. It was front-page news everywhere. The media referred to it as a "disclosure," but it was not; it was merely long-overdue confirmation of a story they had declined to publish when it was news.

Another cover story, in the May 1984 issue of *The Progressive*, was headed "Behind the Death Squads: An Exclusive Report on the U.S. Role in El Salvador's Official Terror." Alan Nairn, a young investigative reporter with much experience in Central America, had put his life at risk by spending five weeks in El Salvador interviewing military officers, civilian officials, members of the security forces, American diplomats, and others about the death squads. He began his story this way: "Early in the 1960s, during the Kennedy Administration, agents of the U.S. Government in El Salvador set up two official security organizations that killed thousands of peasants and suspected leftists over the next fifteen years. These organizations, guided by American operatives, developed into the paramilitary apparatus that came to be known as the Salvadoran Death Squads. Today, even as the Reagan Administration publicly condemns the Death Squads, the CIA—in violation of U.S. law—continues to provide training, support, and intelligence to security forces directly involved in Death Squad activity."

Nairn went on to name names and provide specifics of American and Salvadoran government complicity in torture, murder, and other atrocities. Once again, we sent out news releases and copies of the magazine; we were sure the mass media would be unable to avoid reporting Nairn's findings. Once again, we encountered a virtually total blackout. We believed it was urgently important to call Nairn's story to the attention of Congress, so we scrounged up enough money to publish it as a full-page advertisement in the *Washington Post*—the only way we could get the news into that great "liberal" newspaper.

In March 1993, the United Nations Truth Commission made public its report on human-rights abuses in El Salvador, confirming the sum and substance of Nairn's nine-year-old article. Fortunately, the U.N. commission did not have to buy advertising space to make its findings known; they were *official* news, and they made front pages and evening newscasts everywhere.

I have dwelled on these instances for two reasons: first, because they involve media that are scorned by conservatives as quintessentially "leftist," and, second, because they involve foreign policy issues that obviously ought to be matters of the broadest possible public discussion and debate. It is easy to forget, almost 30 years after the fact, that even the Vietnam War received almost nothing but cheerleader coverage until dissent at home and failure abroad made the war unsupportable. I

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write these words as the United States is poised to send an invasion force of Marines into Haiti, and I think of all the other military interventions of recent years that could have been avoided—or at least better understood by Americans—if the media had not been so eager to parrot the official line: Grenada and Panama, Iraq and Somalia. All turned out to be fiascoes in one way or another, but all were enthusiastically backed by the media, which see it as their role to play stirring martial music when Johnny goes marching off to war.

The mass media's inherent conservatism on domestic issues is, of course, of a piece with their rigidly right-wing approach to foreign affairs, and it has the same roots in the beginnings of the Cold War era. Just as it became mandatory, in the late 1940's and early 1950's, to impose unanimity on discussions of America's role abroad, so it became necessary to ward off "subversives" at home who would promote such "socialist" goals as respect for the Bill of Rights, trade unionism, minority rights, and protection of the natural environment. In each of these areas, the "liberal" media have, at best, paid lip service to liberal goals while striving, by the nature of their coverage, to throttle them.

Consider, for example, the almost total blackout on Canada's "single-payer" health care system in the otherwise extensive coverage of health care in the *New York Times*. Consider the blatantly racist coverage in all mass media that has persuaded most Americans that, one, we have a crisis of violent crime in this country and, two, it consists almost exclusively of violence perpetrated by blacks against whites. Consider the decidedly one-sided coverage that helped railroad the North American Free Trade Agreement to passage. Consider, most of all, the ubiquitous assumption that "the market" can solve all problems and cure all ills.

That such biases pervade the mass media should not surprise us, since they are themselves huge corporate entities that figure prominently on the *Fortune* 500 list. There is nothing remarkable about the fact that big business behaves like big business and, when it can get away with it, shapes the news to serve big-business interests. General Electric, the nation's number-one military contractor, owns NBC, and NBC covers military news the way a contractor would prefer. Why should anyone wonder at that? What does surprise is the willingness of conservatives to suspend disbelief when it comes to assessing realistically the motives of the media corporations.

I am by no means confident that the kind of open forum that would result from genuinely diverse media would basically alter the direction of American politics. To be sure, I find the left's arguments more persuasive than the right's, and I would welcome broader public awareness of left-wing alternatives. But I realize that ours is, in many respects, a profoundly conservative culture and polity and that it is likely to remain that way for a long time. Isn't that all the more reason why conservatives—those, at least, who profess to have faith in the democratic process—would want to see the give-and-take of public discussion and debate on the great issues of our time: a civic discourse nourished by media that provide *many kinds* of facts and *many kinds* of analysis of those facts? c

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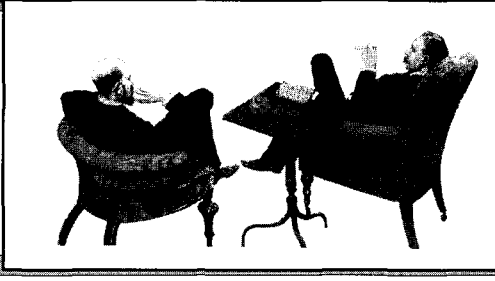

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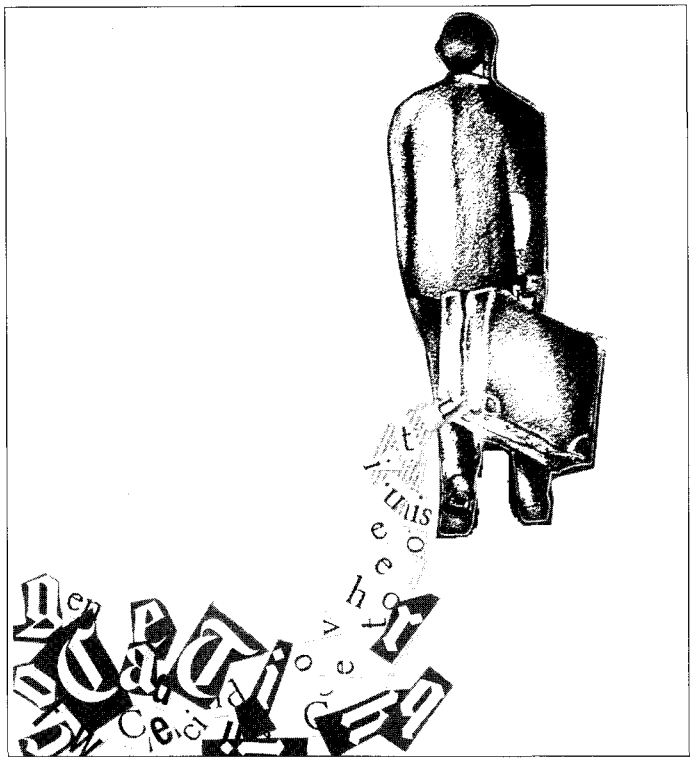
Triberalism

by Terry Przybylski



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

After three decades in which the term "liberal Democratic media" has come to seem an almost complete redundancy, many students of American journalism today are no doubt stunned to learn that, prior to the 1960's, this nation's printed press was regarded by most prominent liberals and Democrats as a bastion of conservatism and Republicanism. When it came to the *Chicago Tribune*, at least, they had it right. Under the direction of its legendary publisher Colonel Robert McCormick, the *Tribune* was not simply the leading voice of Midwestern conservatism, it actually came to be, in many ways, Illinois' Republican moral equivalent of the Chicago Democratic bossocracy. This went beyond McCormick's FDR-bashing throughout the New Deal, the infamous "Dewey Defeats Truman" headline of 1948, or even the fact that in 1964—nine years after the Colonel's death—the *Tribune* was one of only three major dailies in the nation to endorse Barry Goldwater over Lyndon B. Johnson. The newspaper was itself a prime mover and shaker in Illinois Republican politics, often capable of making GOP candidates—and breaking those it did not like. In 1967, the token Republican candidate for mayor of Chicago, unable to mount an effective campaign after the *Tribune* endorsed Mayor Richard J. Daley—who was actually the more conservative of the two—groused to columnist Mike Royko that "the Trib runs the Republican Party in this state, so what could I do?" Even as late as 1970, Royko—then writing for a now-defunct competitor—could complain in his anti-Daley book *Boss* that the *Tribune* "has one reporter who does nothing but ferret out supposed left-wing involvement in the membership of any organization it dislikes." Ah, for the good old days of investigative reporting.

But now, in Clinton's America and in the girlhood hometown of Clinton's wife, we have, as Bill and Hillary might put it, change. After moving slowly but steadily leftward both in its news coverage and on its editorial page for most of the Reagan and Bush years, the *Chicago Tribune* has, in the Clinton era, purged the last of its conservative Republican heritage with a vengeance and become every bit as much a member of the liberal establishment media as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, and the TV networks.

Or how else would you put it when, in the weeks before Clinton took office, a theater reviewer led off his article on a play entitled *A Beggar's Holiday* by harrumphing: "What with relief in Somalia and summits in Little Rock and twinkly lights on Michigan Avenue, a person could start thinking that maybe the 80's are truly over. Maybe rapacity's run its course for the time being, and everyone will start looking out for one another again." Or when a front-page story on Michael Jordan's impact on the Chicago-area economy began like this: "Trickle-down economics may not necessarily have worked in the Reagan-Bush era, but something very much like it seems to be happening in the Chicago region these days." Or when a guest columnist in the paper's business section predicted a revival of Keynesian economics, no less: "Keynesian ideas didn't go away in the face of the New Classical *assault* [italics mine]. They deepened, became subtler, sought to cope with the criticisms that had been made of them. . . . President Clinton's heart is so palpably in the right place that it is hard to fault him for execution." Or when the obituary of a top lieutenant in the African National Congress, whose primary sponsor and fi-

Terry Przybylski spent eight years as a reporter and assistant editor for newspapers in Chicago and its suburbs.

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nancier was the Soviet Union, was headlined: "ANC activist Oliver Tambo dies. Stroke claims towering hero of 30-year fight for freedom." Or when, after 60 percent of House Democrats stiffed Bill Clinton on NAFTA—leaving him to be rescued by the 75 percent of House Republicans who voted for it—the banner front-page headline declared, without a trace of irony, "Clinton's NAFTA triumph."

Alone among the Tribune's political columnists, Royko has steadfastly refused to hop onto his employer's militant gay-rights bandwagon. He scoffed, for example, at the Gay Rights March on Washington and also came out against Clinton's proposed lifting of the ban on open homosexuals in the military.

Inanities such as these seem all but certain to fill the pages of the *Chicago Tribune* for many years to come, given the makeup of the paper's editorial staff—now grown top-heavy, in the manner of most contemporary major media, with 60's kids steeped in the politics of racial and ethnic consciousness, gender warfare, sex habits, and victimology, who interpret the presence in the White House of their counterculture contemporaries and soulmates, the Clintons, as vindication of their own political beliefs. Almost 40 years after Colonel McCormick, the *Tribune* man best known to the nation is Clarence Page, a Washington-based syndicated columnist and sometime talking-head on *The McLaughlin Group*, where he serves as spokesman for the usual agenda of the left-liberal black political establishment. There are also locally prominent political reporters such as Steve Daley, who scarcely seems able to write his weekly opinion column without making a gratuitous reference to "that radio smartypants, Rush Limbaugh," and Jon Margolis, who complained that Limbaugh's airing of the House Bank scandal had caused "undiscriminating disdain toward all elected officials." (Margolis has also publicly poohpoohed the Arkansas state troopers' revelations about Bill Clinton's past marital infidelities as an unfortunate example of investigative journalism gone too far.)

Also locally prominent, and with national exposure of her own, is Carol Kleiman, an "employment specialist" within the paper's business section who relentlessly pursues a hard-left feminist agenda through articles ad nauseam about "employment discrimination," "comparable worth" pay schemes, the Clintons' socialized medicine boondoggle, and, of course, sexual harassment and Anita Hill—who, Kleiman has acknowledged in print, never did prove her accusations against Justice Clarence Thomas, but whom she nevertheless describes as "heroic." Indeed, not just Kleiman but several other female *Tribune* staffers seem to have been given free rein in recent years to conduct a long-term feminist *jihad* from Tribune Tower. Many of them now produce the Sunday section "WOMANEWS," a onetime lifestyle section awkwardly transmogrified into little more than a weekly feminist screed. Also in the girls' clubhouse is gossipmonger Dorothy Collin, who uses her daily "INC." column as a poorly disguised p.r. vehicle from which to promote pro-feminist liberal Democratic politicians and the Hollywood bubblebrains who bankroll them and to tweak any conservative Republicans who might make things uncomfortable for them.

And, of course, there are the gays. Nowhere has the recent lunge of the *Tribune* toward the loony-fringe left been so brazen—or so painful to so many of the paper's longtime subscribers—as in its perfervid embrace of the militant "gay rights" movement. Indeed, the *Tribune*'s coverage of issues and events of concern to militant homosexuals has, in the Clinton era, become so voluminous, so prominently displayed, and so relentlessly supportive of the militant homosexual agenda as to constitute not simply "support" of Chicago's organized "gay community" but out-and-out advocacy.

That there is a large, wealthy, and politically organized "gay community" in Chicago these days is an undeniable fact—if not a point of pride among most Chicagoans. It first came into Chicago politics in a major way with the late Mayor Harold Washington, who found it a useful ally in his always tenuous voting majority; he created a "Mayor's Committee on Gay and Lesbian Issues" and a full-time "Gay/Lesbian Coordinator" in Chicago city government. Mayor Richard M. Daley, campaigning to succeed Washington, decided to embrace gingerly the organized homosexual community rather than risk defeat by mobilizing their votes and money against him in a close race—despite the unconscionably rude treatment to which many "gay activists" had subjected him. Especially memorable was a 1989 confrontation in which some of them told Daley—who lost a three-year-old son to spina bifida in the 1970's—that "he doesn't know what it's like to have a deadly disease." "I have a child who died of an illness!" Daley shouted back at them. "Are you insinuating that I'm not human?" The response of the "gay activists," when he then stormed out of their meeting, was to chant, "Shame, shame, shame!"

That chilling episode was proudly recalled in the *Tribune*'s Sunday magazine just three weeks after Bill Clinton's inauguration in a feature story entitled "Gays and Lesbians in Chicago: Into the Mainstream." Written not by a *Tribune* staffer but by Grant Pick, a writer for the counterculture weekly *Chicago Reader*, the article boasted that "violence and intolerance have produced a new generation of in-your-face activists who challenge head-on what they perceive as bias." Pick quoted a leader of ACT-UP named Tim Miller, who defended outbursts such as the one to which Rich Daley was subjected. "To get things accomplished, we have to embarrass people. If you don't criticize, and many times loudly, politicians will think there's nothing to improve on . . . we have to get over being nice-nice to politicians." Nowhere in Pick's report was an opinion expressed, by anyone, that perhaps such tactics ought not to be employed in civilized discourse—especially not against a man who lost a son to a deadly disease that is not be-

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haviorally based and receives far less public attention and funding than AIDS.

Pick also justified the incredibly promiscuous and risky sexual behavior of the 1970's that led directly to AIDS by quoting a Chicago bar owner named Art Johnston, who "acknowledged that the early bar scene, redolent with sex, led inexorably to the scourge of AIDS. But he sees the time as having its virtues: 'Sure we had our excesses, but the sex was more than just physical acts. We were a minority, coming out and being one with our own. The sex was as political as the black athlete standing at the Olympics in Mexico City (in 1968) with his fist in the air.'" Nowhere in Pick's report did anyone question the wisdom of regarding sex of any kind as a "political act"—particularly the kind that results in the epidemic spread of a killer disease.

The pattern was repeated almost three months later, when the *Tribune* lionized the April 25, 1993, Gay Rights March on Washington. "Gays take fight for dignity to D.C.," blared the banner front-page headline. Reporter Flynn McRoberts began his story, "Bleary-eyed from a fitful night's sleep aboard a crowded bus, Jana Johnson was still ready to seize the day. 'This is my time, a time for me to get recognized as a human being just like any other,' said the 23-year-old college student from Chicago, one of a group of 45 gays and lesbians . . . for them, Sunday will be the first opportunity to fight for dignity on such a grand scale. For them, Sunday will be their chance to make their voices heard." McRoberts described another female student "proudly sporting her 'Dyke,' 'Baby Butch' and 'Out Is In' buttons" and quoted a third student as saying that his father, "a lifelong Republican, voted for Clinton . . . because of the gay rights issue." The Republican National Convention, McRoberts informed us, "with its diatribes against the gay and lesbian community, clinched his father's vote." Nowhere in McRoberts' story were there any differing opinions of the march—or of the Republican Convention, for that matter.

Then there was the flap over Colorado's Amendment Two, passed by a small majority of that state's voters at the same time they were giving a plurality to Clinton, to amend the state constitution so as to disallow so-called "anti-discrimination" ordinances with regard to sexual orientation. Interest in this story among most Chicagoans was, to put it mildly, fleeting at best, but the *Tribune* spent more than a year making a federal case out of it, often on the front page. "Gays consider Colorado boycott," trumpeted a page one headline a few days after the election. Two weeks later came another front-pager headlined "Colorado paying for anti-gay stance," warning darkly of canceled conventions and ski trips. Then came 1993, with not only the same numbers of conventioneers and skiers as before, but also 4.5 million baseball fans storming Mile High Stadium to watch the Colorado Rockies; about 375,000 religious pilgrims and curiosity-seekers flooding into Denver to see Pope John Paul II; and, yes, tens of thousands of Rush Limbaugh fans jamming Fort Collins for "Dan's Bake Sale"—thus making the busy-body editors of the *Chicago Tribune* look quite foolish. The editors did not take the hint. After a Colorado state judge ruled Amendment Two unconstitutional in December, the *Tribune* promptly responded on its editorial page with what can only be described as a hysterical shriek in praise of the imperial judiciary and its ability to negate the wishes of the voters. "A setback for intolerance," bellowed the headline above the editorial. Asserting fatuously that "one of the latest political fads is limiting the rights of homosexuals," the *Tribune* contemptuously declared that "getting the approval of the voters is one thing and getting the approval of the judiciary is another." The amendment, we were informed, "targets one historically mistreated class of people and says that they alone—of all the potential groups in society—may not be shielded against discrimination . . . whatever the ruling's fate in the realm of jurisprudence, it ought to make Coloradans rethink a policy that can only be viewed as bigoted and intolerant."

Whatever happened to the view that under the American system of government and jurisprudence rights inhere in individuals, not "groups" or "classes"? What about those voters who are not convinced that homosexuals have, in fact, been sufficiently "victimized" to require special legal protection? And what about those who are simply weary of being continually assaulted in the public arena by a tiny minority aggressively flaunting behavior that most people consider to be a vice and attempting to cloak it in the robes of virtue? No answer from the *Chicago Tribune*. "Whether anti-gay rights measures are bad law will have to be decided by the courts," its editorial concluded. "That they are bad policy ought to be clear to all." Translation: either you see things our way, or you are evil. Just the kind of attitude, in other words, that the *Tribune* thinks everyone had at the Republican National Convention.

As the whole country knows by now, Chicago's Congressman Dan Rostenkowski, the previously almighty chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, found himself in the fight of his political life in Illinois' March 15 primary elections. The House Post Office scandal and other "appearances of impropriety" had left Rosty in such desperate straits that two weeks before the election—on a day when American warplanes were flying over Bosnia—President Clinton made a special trip to Chicago to beg the Democrats of Illinois' 5th Congressional District to send Rosty back to Washington for the 19th straight time. In the end, they did, giving him just over half the votes in a five-man race—after a crack rescue squad headed by a former Illinois state senator close to the Daleys spent over a month administering CPR to what otherwise might well have become Chicago's newest and biggest political corpse. As one of the ex-state senator's underlings bragged after the votes were counted, "I don't think we have seen anything like it since the late Mayor Daley was alive . . . every single political contact, every single friendship, every single effort was used to bring out the vote for Danny."

One of the most enthusiastic friends of Danny this time around was the *Chicago Tribune*—the very same *Chicago Tribune* that used to hold the old Democratic "Machine" of the first Mayor Daley and Dan Rostenkowski at arm's length. The *Tribune* even went so far as to complain in its editorial endorsement that the investigation of Rostenkowski "was tainted by a publicity-hungry (Republican) prosecutor who seemed intent on indicting the high-powered chairman of the Ways and Means Committee in the press if he couldn't get him indicted by a grand jury." The investigation, the *Tribune* sniffed, had obscured Rosty's "extraordinary accomplishments and considerable influence." "If the voters chew him up and spit him out," the editorial warned, "they lose the person who is far and away their most reliable source for the federal dollars that build and repair their bridges and roads, that erect their affordable housing, that put many Illinoisans to work. . . . He is in the very top reaches of Washington influence, and he wields it with relish and savvy on behalf of the people of his district,

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his city, his state, and the nation." Translation: if he is crooked, so what? He brings home the pork, so vote for him anyway.

The *Tribune*'s cheerleading was not restricted to the editorial page, either. When Bill Clinton came to Chicago to help pull Rostenkowski out of the quicksand, reporters Hanke Gratteau and Mitchell Locin tagged along to get their hands on the rope, too. Dutifully reporting Clinton's ruse that his appearance with Rostenkowski at a Chicago community college was "not political," nor even a formal endorsement of Rosty over his four Democratic challengers, Gratteau and Locin nevertheless wasted no time in getting Clinton's "non-endorsement" message to the *Tribune*'s readers. "Banging on the lectern, Clinton declared that without the House Ways and Means Committee chairman, 'We would not have done the things that were done which have got this economy . . . moving into the future. And we will not be able to do the things we have to do to meet our obligations to the future in this coming year, in health care, welfare reform and many other areas,' the president added as several hundred students and faculty cheered." Gratteau and Locin made no mention at all of the two-year-long federal investigation of Rostenkowski until halfway through their story, on the following page, and then did away with it in two short paragraphs.

Amid all of the Rostenkowski boosterism, however, at least one *Tribune* man remained aggressively unimpressed—Mike Royko. Chicago's premier columnist for the past 30 years, Royko is one of the last true greats of the last generation of newspaper writers whose education consisted primarily of street-smarts, as opposed to ivory-tower agitprop. He has always been, in the Chicago context, a "reform" Democrat (though never a true left-wing ideologue) who made his career by lampooning the excesses of the first Mayor Daley and numerous other old-line "Machine" creatures—including Rostenkowski—while at the same time berating Colonel McCormick's old paper and most Republicans and conservatives with equal vigor. After three decades at three different newspapers, Royko has endured long enough to witness both the steep decline of the "Machine" and the death of the McCormick-style *Tribune*. But now, after spending the last decade at Tribune Tower himself, Royko has begun to seem as strangely out of place under the current *Tribune* editors as he would have been under the Colonel and his immediate successors.

The Rostenkowski story was a perfect illustration—Royko deftly puncturing his bosses' balloon of hot air with nothing more than simple common sense and blunt honesty. How did Rosty feel about Bill Clinton coming to his rescue? "I didn't ask him, so I don't know," Royko wrote. "But I'll tell you how he should feel. He should be embarrassed, humiliated, and feel like a damn fool. Rostenkowski is one of the most powerful men in the Congress . . . all things considered, the president of the United States should not be needed to come in here and act as a precinct captain to get Danny reelected to his umpteenth term. The president of the United States—even a questionable character from Arkansas—shouldn't have to come here to plead for Rostenkowski votes." A *questionable character from Arkansas*! That's the kind of delicious heresy that almost nobody else at the *Tribune* would be allowed to get away with today.

But it's not the first time. Royko has also steadfastly refused to hop onto his employer's militant gay-rights bandwagon. He scoffed, for example, at the Gay Rights March on Washington and also came out against Clinton's proposed lifting of the ban on open homosexuals in the military. "There's nothing wrong with change if it has a positive purpose," Royko wrote at the time. "This doesn't. Gay obsessives have an agenda: total social acceptance. And they are using the military ban as a blue chip in their poker game." For comments like this, Royko has caught some heat from many of Chicago's own gay obsessives, who apparently view it as something akin to treason for such opinions to appear in what they have come to regard more and more as "their" newspaper.

Are there no dissenters besides Royko to this headlong drive of the *Tribune* toward *Village Voice*-style left/liberal orthodoxy? Well, maybe a few—very few. Columnists Joan Beck and Stephen Chapman often provide the editorial page with a lonely island of reason in a sea of psychobabble. Some of the business writers still appear to prefer the free market to economic statism. And if you want to include the sports pages, outdoors writer and columnist John Husar sometimes attracts brickbats from environmentalist extremists and "animal rights" advocates for his staunch defense of hunters.

But that's about it. At the *Chicago Tribune*—renowned in all the journalism history books for its kamikaze conservative Republicanism—Mike Royko, God love him, is winding up his illustrious career as one of the closest things there is anymore to a conservative, whether he likes it or not. As for almost all the rest of his colleagues, they bear a much greater resemblance to one of the newest nationally syndicated columnists to be added to the *Tribune* editorial page—Anna Quindlen. ◁C▷

THE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.,

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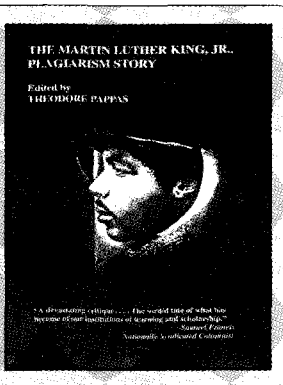
Edited by Theodore Pappas



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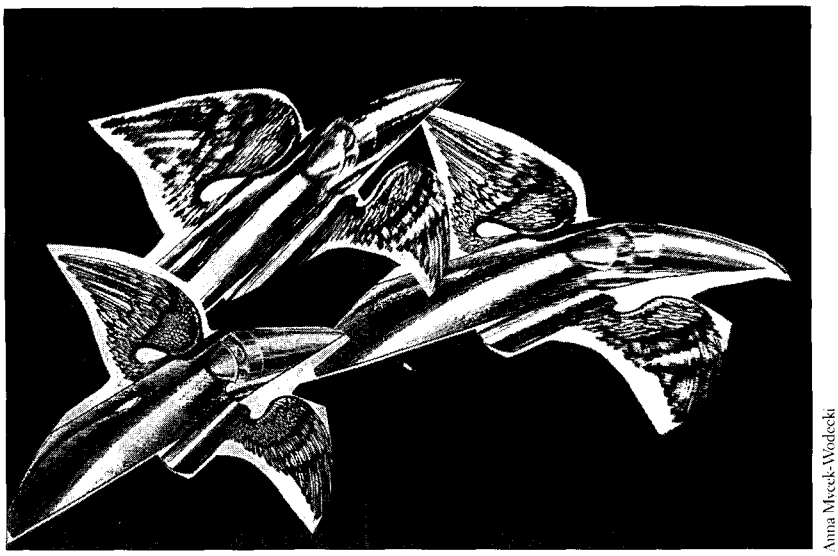
by Alex N. Dragnich



Anna Mecik-Wodecki

The use of NATO military strikes against the Bosnian Serbs, at the urgings of the Clinton administration, camouflages for the moment a rift that has occurred in the Western alliance. Sooner or later recriminations over "who lost Yugoslavia?" are certain to come. And though it may be a while before historians render a verdict, there are already some indications that the answer will be "the Western European powers with the complicity of the United States." The reason: a failure to understand the basic issues in the Yugoslav crisis.

Since the Western media failed—or simply refused—to state or explain the issues in that civil war, particularly as seen by the largest ethnic group (the Serbs), I elicited information from Serbian friends and acquaintances who were visiting the United States or who were writing or phoning in an effort to be heard. What follows is a summary of those conversations.

"For nearly 50 years we were forced to suffer under communism, which we did not choose, and yet nary a word of concern from you. As a matter of fact, after 1948, your Presidents and Secretaries of State praised our dictator Tito, whom you know was a Croat and not a Serb. Communism was not our doing; you betrayed us near the end of World War II, when you abandoned our guerrilla leader, General Mihajlovitch, and supported the communists. We were your allies in the two world wars, and yet now you heap all sorts of evil upon our heads and blame us for everything in Yugoslavia."

The voice was that of an intelligent, well-educated, and well-traveled Serbian woman at least 20 years my junior. The allegations and imputations were obviously not personal, but as was to be the case in nearly every one of my encounters, there was the inescapable question: "Why?"

The torrent seemed unending, but I had to listen. These were friends. More than that, I wanted to learn more about the agitated Serbian psyche in the present tragic situation. I was eager to ask about Sarajevo, Dubrovnik, and ethnic cleansing, among other things. But I quickly sensed that each conversationalist wanted to be sure that I viewed everything in the appropriate historical context.

In all of our conversations there was much harking back to Serbia's past, and no end of repetition. I cannot even estimate how often I heard the same plaintive voice that expected me to understand. Although American in every way—birth, education, profession, family—I am of Serbian parentage, which they believed would enable me to put myself in their shoes and to grasp the enormity of their psychological as well as material burdens.

These were friends with whom I spent many an enjoyable and interesting hour when I served as cultural attaché and public affairs officer in the American Embassy in Belgrade right after World War II, as well as many years later when I was doing research in Serbian and Yugoslav history. Many had read some of my books, most had not. They were aware that I was familiar with what they were telling me, but this did not diminish their determination to make sure.

I lost count of the times I was asked: "Are you Americans totally blind?" "Has foreign propaganda so hoodwinked you that you have lost your critical faculties?" "Are American Presidents and senators so mesmerized by TV pictures that they cannot think rationally; don't you have people in your State Department who know Yugoslavia and Yugoslav history?" These rhetorical questions I could handle with a shrug of the shoulders, a shaking of the head, or some other vague gesture. The substantive ones were more difficult. Many a time, I had to come back to my Serbian friends and acquaintances with the question: "Was there a way to avoid civil war?"

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A Serb friend, whose family is from Croatia and whose university degree is in engineering, was quick to tell me that although Slovenia fired the first shots in the civil war, that in itself was not critical because there were no appreciable minorities in Slovenia. Hence Slovenian independence came without much bloodshed. Croatia was different, he said, because of the large Serbian minority, which did not want to be in a Croatian state. "That situation might have been resolved," he continued, "if the Tudjman regime [in Croatia] had been willing to treat the Serbs as equals. Instead it reduced them to minority status and then engaged in all sorts of discrimination against them. In addition, there were anonymous telephone threats, ugly signs painted on Serbian homes, and the like. And there was no chance that the Serbs would be given autonomy." When I asked him to amplify, he replied that the worst part of the regime was its "adopting of symbols and other trappings of the hated World War II Ustasha fascist state."

'But,' he shouted, 'you won't read about these matters in your press, even though American newsmen know about them. After all, they are reporting from Sarajevo, and if they reported these things they would soon be on their way out. That's like getting your news of World War II happenings from Berlin,' he said, with emphasis and a note of bitterness in his voice.

A Serb doctor from Zagreb pointed out that under the circumstances many of Croatia's Kraina Serbs fled to Serbia but that most of them stayed, organized, and resisted. "Yugoslav army units in the area," he added, "came to their defense, and the civil war in Croatia began." After several months, during which Serbian forces occupied a significant chunk of territory, there was a cease-fire and a United Nations peacekeeping force was brought in.

All of this was familiar to me, so I eagerly moved on to a discussion of Bosnia-Herzegovina (which I will simply call Bosnia), a highly complex and complicated subject. When the moment seemed appropriate, I usually began with the question: "How did it all begin?"

"As you know, communism was a failure here as in Russia and everywhere else," was most frequently the opening response. "When the Yugoslav Communist Party began to split up into many communist parties along nationality lines, what we had known but could not say publicly was out in the open—Tito and his comrades had not solved the nationality problem; they had made it worse. They swept it under the rug, where bitterness accumulated until the dam was ready to burst."

"You mean . . . ," I started to say. "Yes, I mean Tito's vintage was where the grapes of wrath were stored," he replied, letting me know that he was familiar with some Americana.

"Yes," I said, "but how did the breakup of Yugoslavia begin?"

"As far as we Serbs are concerned, you know that we have always been the strongest supporters of the common state, but when we saw that others—especially the Croats—were not happy with Yugoslavia, we began to doubt the wisdom of our own position, particularly when we saw that under communism we got the short end of the stick."

"But," added a colleague, "we were not the ones that started to destroy Yugoslavia; we still wanted to save it."

"You know, Professor, a few years ago some of our intellectuals in the Academy of Arts and Sciences began drafting a statement about the problems and difficulties facing Yugoslavia and suggesting ways to deal with them, and you know what happened? Someone got a draft copy of what was called *The Memorandum*, and without the text being published anywhere, our communist press viciously attacked it as an expression of Serbian nationalism."

"Strange, isn't it," another friend added, "that now in the West they call it Miloshevitch's platform of Serbian nationalism!"

"Yes," declared his colleague. "When Miloshevitch became head of the Serbian party, he may have taken some ideas from it. You recall he went to Kosovo in April 1987, and in a huge meeting that lasted at least 12 hours he heard the sorrowful woes of many Serbs and how they had been persecuted by the Albanians and even by some of their Serbian colleagues in the government of the province—all of them communist party hacks."

"And," I broke in, "that experience made Miloshevitch a Serbian nationalist?"

"Well," my friend volunteered, "that is when he made the statement heard round the world," again seeking to impress me with his knowledge of Americana. "At that meeting in Kosovo, many Serbs seeking to get into the crowded hall were beaten by the police. When Miloshevitch, in response to a disturbance, was told what had happened, he ordered that more Serbs be allowed to enter and assured them with: 'No one will ever beat you again!'"

"Wait a minute," I interrupted, "there were other Serbian communists who defended Serbian interests—Rankovic, Nikezic, Perovic."

"But none of them survived politically," my friend hurried to say, "and maybe they were not really defending Serbian interests, and anyway they were all purged! Miloshevitch is the first, not only to survive but to rise to the top."

"And therein lies the tragedy," a retired university professor told me on another occasion, "because so many of my intellectuals hoped that he would launch Serbia on a democratic path, but their trust was misplaced."

A young professional who grew up in Kosovo and whom I had just met for the first time sought to emphasize the importance of Kosovo to Serbs, calling it "Serbia's Jerusalem" and "the cradle of the Serbian nation," as well as the area of Serbia's sacred monuments—Christian churches and monasteries.

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"And you know," he added, "during the entire Tito period, the Kosovo Albanians were systematically persecuting the Serbs—setting haystacks on fire, cutting down fruit trees, raping young girls on their way from school—and desecrating their monuments, and yet there was not a word about it in our or the world's press. Several years after Tito's death we learned that the Serbian Orthodox Church in Belgrade in 1969 had sent a protest to Tito, but the public heard nothing of it at the time. Tito gave some assurances, but nothing changed."

I was eager to leave Kosovo and to move on, but another friend told me not to forget that during the Tito years Kosovo Albanians had not only persecuted Serbs and forced them to flee, while countless thousands of Albanians were immigrating to Kosovo, but had also "brought hundreds of teachers and textbooks from Albania."

When I turned my attention to Bosnia, the immediate response was: "Bosnia is Serbian; Sarajevo is Serbian." Subsequently, the response was qualified—I could not understand the problem of Bosnia-Herzegovina except in the context of the Yugoslav civil war, which began with the secessions of Slovenia and Croatia. "Had it not been for the hasty recognition of them by the West," I was told, "Bosnia-Herzegovina would not have sought independence, and there would not have been this bloodshed." "Once Western Europe followed Germany's decision to recognize Slovenia and Croatia, there was no way that the Yugoslav state could be saved," was a familiar refrain that I heard over and over again. "And," my friends kept repeating, "when the West recognized the rights of Slovenes and Croats to self-determination, we Serbs believed that the same principle should apply to us, but we soon found out that such was not the case."

Yes, chimed in another friend, "the West told Slovenia and Croatia that it was OK for them to violate the Helsinki Accords with respect to changing international boundaries by force but told us we could not do that even after they aided Slovenia and Croatia in those violations. Our grievances did not matter!" The lack of evenhandedness in the West's approach to the Yugoslavs was pounded into me on countless occasions, and there was always the "Why?"

"You know, Professor, there were nearly a million Serbs in Croatia, and they did not want to live in a Croatian state, especially in view of the fact that hundreds of thousands of their forebears were massacred by the Croats when the latter were last independent as a satellite of Germany in World War II." To this I could only nod.

"And, Professor, you know we could not abandon our brothers in Bosnia. There are over a million and a half of them. At the time of the Turkish conquest in the 15th century Bosnia was Serbian. And once Serbia regained her independence in the 19th century, we fought to regain Bosnia, but the great powers gave it to Austria-Hungary, from which we finally got it in World War I. And then we all formed Yugoslavia."

Here I was again listening to a lot of history I already knew, but I was at least partially helpless to stop the prose. "But what happened under communism?" I interjected.

"Professor, it is a long story. In the 1920's and 1930's we did not divide up into republics, but Tito split us up. And when the Muslims and Croats in Bosnia wanted to follow Croatia and Slovenia by seeking independence, our brothers who had lived there for centuries did not want to be separated from Serbia."

"And you know what is so tragic," added another friend, "is that the Muslims bet on the wrong horse twice—in World War II, when they joined pro-Nazi Croatia in the extermination of Serbs, and now in this try to form a nation that never existed before."

More than once my friends reminded me that the Muslims were mainly the descendants of Serbs who had converted to Islam under the Turks. "Would you want to live under such people?" I was asked. "What would you think of citizens in your country who, if you were occupied by a foreign power, would accept the foreign religion of your conqueror and then serve him, and now you are asked to live under the rule of such people?" Again and again there was a return to the question: If self-determination was good for the Croats and Slovenes, why not the Serbs?

I pointed out that in 1992 the Serbs were but 34 percent of the population of Bosnia-Herzegovina even though they held more than 60 percent of the territory before the fighting began, but I was promptly given official statistics showing that between 1878 and 1971 the Serbs were the largest group. In 1971, Tito introduced the ethnic category "Muslim," and that reduced the number of persons listing themselves as Serbs. According to the 1991 Yugoslav census, the population distribution was: Muslims, 44 percent; Serbs, 34 percent; Croats, 17 percent; and various other minorities, 5 percent.

So much for history. I wanted my friends to talk about the ongoing war and recent atrocities. "What about the shelling of Sarajevo's skyline buildings?" I asked a Serb economist born and reared in Sarajevo. "I cannot defend the shelling of civilian areas," he said, "but let's look at it from the point of view of the Bosnian Serb authorities. First, you know that Serbian money built much of modern Sarajevo, that the Yugoslav National Army built the Olympic Village and other facilities in connection with the Olympics. So Serbs are reacting like the boy who builds something for his playmates, who then kick him off the field. He, in turn, seeks to destroy what he built. Irrational reaction to ingratitude? Maybe, but. . . ."

"In addition," he continued, "many of the tall buildings were being used as observation towers by the Muslim forces." Part of the problem, he added, is "Serbian frustration—not knowing how to deal with fellow-citizens with whom you thought you were building a better country, only to find out that they wanted to go their separate way once they got as much as they could from the common effort."

"What of ethnic cleansing, prison camps, atrocities?" I asked another Serb from Bosnia, as well as several Serbs from outside it. All of the answers were similar. "As you know," said one, "civil wars are the most tragic of wars, but in all wars there are people who are displaced from their homes, there are prison camps, and many people are killed, some in battle, some accidentally, and others in fits of anger resulting from a variety of circumstances."

"But what about charges of genocide?" I asked. "There was no genocide," was the universal answer. "It is true that in many densely populated places many Muslims were killed, but so were many Serbs as well as Croats. Some massacres were awful and cannot be defended, but all three parties have been guilty."

"Muslims were not killed because they were Muslims," another friend was quick to add. "It is true that in some areas of Bosnia that Serbs occupied, many Muslims were dispossessed—but not killed, unless they refused to obey the occu-

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pying forces. In many such areas, they were not disturbed if they did not constitute a threat to the occupation army." Another friend was anxious to tell me that, of course, rapes were committed by all sides, but, he said, "there is not a shred of evidence that rape was ordered by anyone in authority, and certainly not as policy."

A Serbian writer from Belgrade, who had been with Serbian forces in Bosnia and Kraina, wanted to tell me of Muslim prisons for Serbs in Sarajevo, as well as of Sarajevo Muslims killing Serbs so that they could take their apartments. "Your press talks about harmony in Sarajevo and Bosnia generally, but, you know, a Serb apartment dweller in Sarajevo does not dare show his face on his balcony for fear of being shot, on the grounds that he is signaling Serb forces." "But," he shouted, "you won't read about these matters in your press, even though American newsmen know about them. After all, they are reporting from Sarajevo, and if they reported these things they would soon be on their way out. That's like getting your news of World War II happenings from Berlin," he said, with emphasis and a note of bitterness in his voice.

Another Serbian friend wanted to know why the American media were concentrating all of their attention on Sarajevo. "Why don't they tell your people about the long Croat shelling of Trebinje, or the Muslim and Croat shelling of Mostar, as well as many smaller places?" And, he added, "why no mention of the Croats placing guns alongside the cathedral in Sibenik?"

This prompted me to ask about the shelling of Dubrovnik. "The fighting around Dubrovnik," said a Serb who was born in that area, "was prompted by the Croatian forces' attack on our naval facilities at the base of the Prevlaka peninsula, not far from Dubrovnik." In addition, he continued, "the Croats had placed their troops in the hotels around the old city, so that they spied on our signal station on top of the mountain, so some of the buildings and boats by the old city were hit. But Serbian forces did not destroy Dubrovnik. At least one American professor, and Roman Catholic at that, visited the old city and confirmed that there was only minor damage inside the old city. The major damage was to the Serbian church library." He asked me if I had seen any pictures showing the destruction of Dubrovnik, and I had to admit that I had not—and neither had any of my friends.

On one occasion I turned to an old acquaintance—I could not call him a friend, because when I first knew him most of my friends viewed him as close to the regime—and asked what the situation was like in 1991, when it seemed that Slovenia and Croatia were about to secede. I got a learned lecture. "You know," he began, "we thought that the government could handle the situation. We had become accustomed to viewing the dictatorship as all-powerful. And there was the Yugoslav National Army, which Tito always told us could be counted upon to save Yugoslavia in any emergency."

"But," I asked, "who was in charge?"

"Well, maybe if we Serbs had been in charge," he noted with a tone of resignation, "things might have been different."

"Where were the Serbs?" I demanded. "The American media almost always speaks of the 'Serb-dominated Yugoslavia,'" I asserted.

"Your media is absolutely wrong. When Slovenia seceded, the Yugoslav government was mainly in the hands of non-Serbs. Just look who was prime minister, Ante Markovic, a Croat. And who was minister of foreign affairs, Budimir Loncar, another Croat. The minister of defense and supreme commander was General Veljko Kadijevic, son of a Serb-Croat marriage, and his deputy was Stane Brovet, a Slovene. The chief of the air force was Zvonko Jurjevic, another Croat. Does that look like a Serb-dominated Yugoslavia?!" "And," my friend continued, "it was Ante Markovich who signed the order to have the army take over frontier posts on Slovenia's borders, as he was ordered to do by the Federal Executive Council."

"What puzzles us," he went on to say, "is why your leaders were in such a hurry to help those who wanted to destroy Yugoslavia. And after the dismemberment began, why were they so determined to perpetuate Tito's greatest injustice to us Serbs? Instead of seeking to resolve disagreements here, they were willing to have communist Miloshevitch be the only defender of Serbian interests. Why?"

Another friend took up the question of sanctions. "You went to the U.N. and got sanctions against us and against no one else. Why? You knew that there were 50,000 Croatian troops in Bosnia, but no sanctions against Croatia. Is this what you call a fair and impartial policy?"

The wife of a Serbian doctor, recently on a visit to Belgrade, told me of the suffering that the Serbian people are enduring. "My friends asked me," she said, "if you Americans realized who the sanctions were hurting. Don't they know that the rulers here are not hurting, but the common people?"

"And," her companion chimed in, "it is the children who are suffering the most. They tell you that medicine and medical supplies are exempt from sanctions, but those at the U.N. who write the sanctions rules and procedures have made life impossible; they keep changing the rules. Our doctors are desperate, but do you care?"

"Your press," observed a professor friend of mine while visiting relatives in the United States, "keeps talking about refugees from Bosnia in Western Europe, but not a word about Serbian refugees. And what about all the refugees we have here? Don't you Americans know that we have over a half-million refugees in Serbia? And thousands are Muslims, who would rather come here than go to Croatia. And we have Croats, too. Somehow, we think you know but just don't care." I admitted that I do not have any answers.

The same professor wondered out loud, while we were having our after-dinner coffee: "Where are your intellectuals, your professors and specialists on Eastern Europe? They must know what is going on. Are they not outraged by the lies being purveyed by your media? You know, we had our weak-kneed intellectuals, but under a communist dictatorship what could you expect? But you pride yourself on being a democracy, a place where independent inquiry and dissent does not send you to jail. What has frozen the mouths of your intellectuals?"

"A few have spoken up," I responded, "usually in letters to the editor, but for the most part major media channels have not been open to them, certainly not the columns of such influential newspapers as the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Los Angeles Times*, or *Washington Post*." I did not like to admit this, but I knew it to be true. I was glad that he did not ask about the major network TV newscasts.

We returned to the topic a few days later, and I was able to show him an article from *Foreign Policy*, written by Peter Brock, a politics editor of the *El Paso Herald-Post*, entitled "Dateline Yugoslavia: The Partisan Press," wherein he detailed the distortions, and even fabrications, of certain correspondents and their editors. Some had unashamedly engaged in "Serb-

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bashing." I was also able to show him translated excerpts from a 1993 book by the Frenchman Jacques Merlino, the title of which (in English) reads *The Truth From Yugoslavia Is Not Being Reported Honestly*. Among other things, Merlino reports that an official of a public relations firm in Washington told him that their greatest success was in having, in effect, led the major American Jewish organizations by the nose over to the pro-Croatian side.

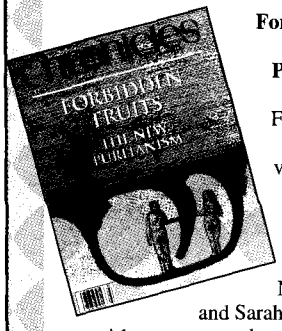
A friend of mine had already given the professor a few copies of *Chronicles*, with informative articles by Thomas Fleming and Momcilo Selic. Earlier, I had mailed him a few of my op-ed pieces that had appeared in papers in Philadelphia and in Nashville, as well as a few articles written by university faculty friends of mine. "Yes," he said, "the truth is breaking through in a limited way, but your major news sources are very much like a broken record." I could not disagree.

At another time I was talking with a lawyer friend who lives in Belgrade. He told me of a friend who in 1992 had long talks with a non-Serb American attorney who had held important positions in the United States government. The Serb told the American: "Look, we believed that only you Americans could be trusted to help, to be fair. What of Britain, we asked? Well, we knew that Britain was over the hill. France? Incapable and not really trustworthy. Russia? Russia has too many problems of her own. That only left you, but what did you do? You turned us over to the Germans, our bitter enemies in two world wars."

When I asked another Belgrade friend if Serbs had any contact with the American Embassy, she spoke matter-of-factly: "They don't really want to see us, and you know when a friend of mine came to Belgrade from Bosnia, she went to the American Embassy and told a young American officer there that she wanted to report on atrocities. When he asked what atrocities, she said they were atrocities against Serbs, and you know what he told her? They were only interested in those committed *by* Serbs!"

When I began a conversation with a retired professor of sociology, a woman, she cut me off before I could put forth a question: "You Americans have lost Serbia's trust and friendship forever." The bitterness in her voice left me with a feeling of sadness. It all seemed so unnecessary. Were we really so inept in handling foreign relations, especially in dealing with people who in the past had been such faithful allies? At least I had heard voices about the Yugoslav civil war that are almost never heard in our media.

GREAT TOPICS, GREAT ISSUES



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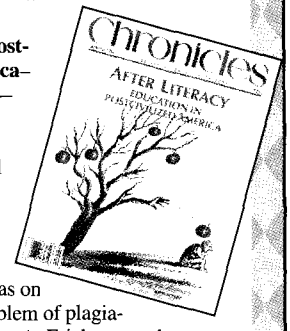

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Russophilia

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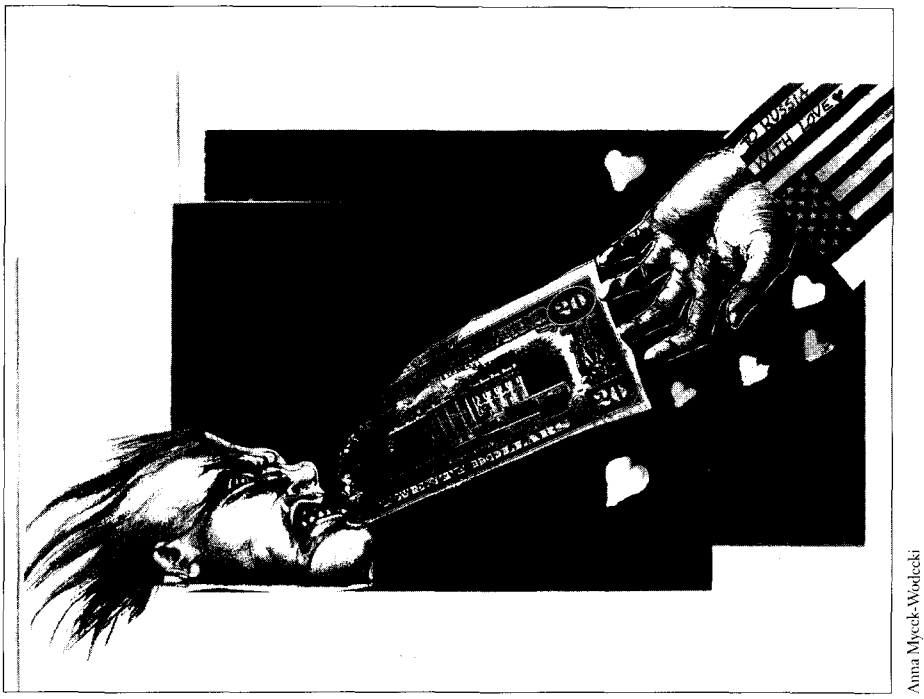

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

The deluge of statements, articles, and books on Russia in these turbulent (for Russia) times comes as no surprise. What surprises is the ingratiating and monotonously uncritical terms of discourse in which American opinions about Russia are couched. Many of these terms date back to the Soviet era. No country in Europe has ever generated so much obsequiousness.

For months, nearly every issue of the *New York Times* has featured an article saying in effect: "Let's help the poor Mr. Ivanov in Moscow, he is in bad economic trouble, he has been humiliated, and there may be more trouble if we do not help him." While the calls to charity multiply, fawning upon things Russian is also very much in evidence. In recent years, almost every American institution worth its mettle has sponsored a pilgrimage to Moscow, and the pilgrims, awestruck by the Oriental splendor of the last imperial city on earth, have listened humbly to their Russian guides explaining the glories and sufferings of Russian history and telling where and how to send a plane ticket enabling a victimized Russian to visit the West. The notion of Russia's victimhood, implanted in Russian and foreign memory by Russian writers of the 19th century, survived the years of Soviet military might (indeed it was nourished by Moscow) and continues to find willing followers among American journalists and academics.

The worship of Russia in America crosses ideological boundaries. On the left, the pageant started with the likes of Armand Hammer, who flirted with Russia's leaders from Lenin to Gorbachev. Many a lesser leftist figure, e.g., Suzanne Massie in her panegyric to Russia, *Land of the Firebird: The Beauty of Old Russia*, has viewed Russia as a country where life was lived according to Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*—never mind that its libretto was taken from E.T.A. Hoffmann's tale. University towns in Siberia and museums that routinely stole from conquered peoples get the ah's and oh's of American visitors. On the right, there is the idealization of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a man of indisputable courage and patriotism but hardly a reliable source of information about the history of Russia, let alone about what's best for America.

"For tens of millions of Russians, life has gone from the harsh to the intolerable," laments Patrick Buchanan. "Ease up on Russia," urges economist Padma Desai of Columbia University, directing her appeal to the International Monetary Fund, which asked Russians to keep their budget deficit below five percent to qualify for new credits (they never complied). Desai says that foreign investors should likewise disregard Russian budget deficits, because the shock therapy that worked in Eastern Europe could not work in Russia. She mentions a submarine factory at Severodvinsk that she says would find it exceedingly difficult to produce anything but submarines. But Professor Jeffrey Sachs has noted that Russia has never tried shock therapy. Unlike the Eastern European governments that opened their financial books for the Western world to see, Russia continues to shroud her finances and spending in secrecy. Officials in the Clinton administration believe that Russia continues chemical weapons research, but no inves-

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tigative reporter has tackled this matter. Ironically, we have given Russia millions to destroy the stocks of her old chemical weapons.

Truly trivial books on Russia have multiplied for years, written by journalists, professors, and ordinary visitors. The *New York Times* has reviewed some of those I have refused to review for the local paper, while passing over books from countries whose armies do not generate such critical Dane-Geld.

Russia specialist Steven Erlanger once composed a human-interest story slanted to pull the strings of American compassion. It deals with a Russian Army captain, Andrei Tarada, and his wife and daughter, who lived in Soviet-occupied Eastern Europe in a three-room apartment and had their own car. Now back in Russia, they have only one room and no car. Thus, the aggressors from Russia get a full measure of sympathy while the peoples whose lands they occupied get none. What Andrei Tarada and his ilk did to the citizens of the foreign lands they occupied remains totally beyond the area of vision of the American reporter. Imagine this kind of solicitation bestowed on Nazi soldiers returning to Germany from occupied France. Lithuanians once tried to present the Russians with a bill for the damage done to their country, to the accompaniment of guffaws from the Russian generals, guffaws which resonated in the American press. Recently, the Poles attempted to persuade the Russians to exhume and bury (at Russian expense) some of the 20,000 Polish officers Soviet Russians murdered at Katyn and elsewhere. No agreement has been reached yet, under the pretext that the Russian Orthodox Church objects to the exhumation of bodies! As someone said, it is easier to squeeze water out of a stone than to make Russians pay even a symbolic price for the atrocities their regime committed against the conquered peoples.

Even the most unsavory individuals profit from the massive reduction of critical acumen that the American media display when dealing with things Russian, because information from Russia is "cleaned up" before publication. Vladimir Zhirinovsky said that he visited Bulgaria to consult a Bulgarian fortune-teller named Vanga, who, he said, "predicted a very good year" for him. "Next year is the year of the dog, so it is my year, just as it is the year of Clinton. But while Russia will be on the rise, Clinton will have to face problems in the United States," Zhirinovsky said. The most famous contemporary Russian clairvoyant, named Kashpirovsky, is said to have supported Zhirinovsky in the elections. A Russian professor of psychiatry charged that Kashpirovsky hypnotized TV viewers, thus increasing the pro-Zhirinovsky vote. When Tatarstan protested Russian attempts to reign it into the empire, Ruslan Khasbulatov, then speaker of the Russian Parliament, threatened to "take Kazan by force for the second time, and bring the Tartar leader to Moscow in a cage." I searched in vain for information about such superstitions and barbarities in the *New York Times* and in provincial newspapers. The most shocking details about the Russian elites are simply not publicized by the courtier press, so that an impression is created that "we can do business with the Russians because they are so much like us." Interestingly, no such assumptions are made about the Chinese; nor can one perceive a courtier tone in reports from China filed by American journalists. A whiff of racism, perhaps.

Efforts are also exerted to present Russian social habits and customs as similar if not identical to those of America and to put the most flattering spin on events in Moscow. A UPI article sent out on December 31, 1993, reported that "Russians were shopping like mad Friday to beat a New Year's Eve deadline for spending their hard currencies" because, starting January 1, "retail trade in Russia will be in rubles or through credit cards." The article added that "the ruble is now a freely convertible currency." I have yet to meet a Russian who knows exactly the details of credit-card shopping, let alone owns a credit card. Second, the ruble is not freely convertible. Third, the measure introduced by Yeltsin takes Russia farther away from a market economy and reinforces the black market in rubles and dollars that has never totally disappeared. But the spin the author put on this was that "both Russians and Americans like to shop, especially before New Year's Eve."

The ingratiating tactic of the American elites eager to compliment Moscow reached new heights after Vladimir Zhirinovsky's successes and Yeltsin's subsequent changes in policy. Whatever President Yeltsin now proclaims is OK with the American political establishment. The 1994 policy, recommended by the Clinton administration and cheered by most commentators, is to allow Russia to slow down the conversion of industry and agriculture from socialism to capitalism (read: disregard the unlimited credits extended by the Russian central bank to the military-industrial complex). We should allow for the temporary increase in inflation and concentrate on the welfare of the Russian people. No one is paying attention to the fact that three years after the dissolution of the U.S.S.R., there is almost no private land ownership in Russia and monopolies still control much of the economy. In Strobe Talbot's words, Russia has had "too much shock and too little therapy." Russia is simply unable to convert at the speed envisaged by Western economists, it is argued. We never hear why; if pressed, Russia Firsters say that Russia is too big to adhere to theories that worked elsewhere. This reminds one of Napoleon's saying that "Russia is a country of the future, and always will be."

In exhortations and appeals written by Russia-worshipers, Russian realities are expressed in a language steeped in the American tradition, without deflecting its connotations from those applicable to a country of free citizens to those appropriate to a country where the citizens themselves, without a foreign conquest, gave birth to czars and commissars. There seems to emerge a vocabulary pertaining to Russia that enshrines factual mistakes in generally accepted terms of discourse. This faulty vocabulary is somewhat like a sieve through which information essential for analysis escapes unnoticed. For a quick example, consider that the word "Russia" is usually applied not only to ethnic Russia but also to Tatarstan or Tuva or Chechnya, where Russians are a minority and where the indigenous inhabitants clamor for independence. The misunderstanding is partly caused by the peculiarities of American development. Aren't New Mexico and New England equally American? Aren't American Indians part of American society? It would therefore seem that Moscow and, say, the Volga River are equally "Russian." A popular Russian song calls the Volga "a Russian river." But as Professor Hugh Seton-Watson said in *The Russian Empire: 1801-1917*, the Volga is in fact a Turkic river, and the peoples who live along its shores are Turkic. If you think Seton-Watson is outdated, consider the recent stirrings in Tatarstan on the Volga, whose inhabitants, 3.7 million strong, are poised to assert their separateness from Russia. To designate as "Russia" those vast spaces conquered but never acculturated by the Russians, spaces teeming with emerging and energy-

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rich nations, falsifies the discourse from the outset.

As Ambassador Richard F. Staar pointed out, Russians comprise 83 percent of all Russian Federation people but occupy less than half of federation territory. The other half belongs to various national groups to whom Russian rule brought unqualified misery. The British settlers civilized the lands they took away from the American Indians, and they created a new nation in these territories, eventually severing their political ties with the country from which they came. But Russians kept attacking their contiguous neighbors and, having overpowered them, treated them as Mother Russia's bounty. Russians generally treat wealth as something one can take away from Paul and give to Peter, not as something that can be created. From Peter the Great until 1914, the empire has expanded at a rate of 55 square miles a day, plundering other people's wealth as it went along.

It can only be imagined what brutalities this rate of expansion created both for the conquered and the conquerors. These brutalities became enshrined in the empire's social memory and its political behavior. Such voracious colonial appetite also created a land glut that exists to this day in the Russian Federation. It made assimilation and the rule of law practically impossible. The Russian Federation is simply too vast and diverse to be administered in an orderly fashion or to be a unified state. It can be ruled only by a tyrant, whether he be czar or commissar. This rather obvious conclusion emerges as one acquires some knowledge of the geographic, linguistic, and historical differences between the various lands that American courtiers so obligingly call "Russia." But I have yet to encounter a Russia-watcher who would come forth with a set of coherent suggestions in this regard. The fear of offending Moscow goes far beyond government circles. It is a disease that has affected a good number of American scholars, not to speak of journalists. While the latter may claim that their livelihood is at stake (*Newsweek*'s Moscow bureau chief, Andrew Nagorski, was expelled in 1982 for "impermissible methods of journalistic activities"), scholars do not have a similar excuse.

While the empire expanded in an unprecedented fashion, it failed to produce intellectuals capable of fashioning out a *modus vivendi* for the vast territories conquered by the brutalized and brutalizing Russian peasants. With a few notable exceptions, the Russia-watchers in this country have refused to notice that very little in Russian history, literature, or social experience provides patterns of peaceful living within Russia's ethnic borders. The tragedy of Russia is that its culture created no understanding that the military must be subordinated to the civilian, that treaties with *weaker* neighbors were not to be *secretly* broken, and that a nation need not constantly think of how to sow discord among its neighbors, with a view to taking them over and running their countries for its own benefit.

Russia has had no political thinkers who could lead it into a peaceful and realistic world. The best ideas Russia has produced are applicable to private lives (as, for instance, some ideas of Dostoyevsky and Solzhenitsyn), but not to the running of a state or to the study of history. On the political side, there have been the expansionists and bards of Russian suffering (including Dostoyevsky); the wrongheaded utopians like Chernyshevsky or Tkachev, from whom Lenin derived his conception of an elitist Communist Party; and the benign utopians like Tolstoy, who led Russian social thought down dead-end streets.

Not only did Russia not have its Thomas Jefferson or George Washington or the *Federalist Papers*, it did not have the dozens and hundreds of civic-minded writers who have abounded in America, France, England, Poland, Czechia, Spain, and Germany. Russia's writers either refused to provide any political and social answers, like Chekhov, or they pointed in the wrong direction, like Dostoyevsky in his eulogies of Russia or Chernyshevsky in his vision of a utopian socialist future. Thus Russia entered the modern age carrying on its back a bundle of chauvinistic, utopian, or socialist writings, with not a single writer offering a realistic pattern of development for the empire. Not one Russian author has concluded that Russia's troubles stem largely from its having swallowed too much of other people's land. For generations, Russian intellectuals treated Russia's military posture as a nonissue. This is the Russian tragedy one seldom hears about. This phenomenon should attract the attention of both foreign researchers and the Russian elites; but nothing of that sort has happened.

Now the nations conquered by Russia, which Russia failed to assimilate because of the rate of its expansion, have emerged from the cocoon of tribalism and begun the laborious process of self-assertion. For starters, they want to put a stop to the kind of accounting by which it appears Moscow subsidizes them, not the other way around. Sakha-Yakutia has been empowering the Russian military for hundreds of years with its gold and diamonds (mined by prison labor in a premodern gulag), yet in present-day economic accounting it figures as one of the provinces that gives less to the central treasury than it receives! This is because what counts is taxes and not the mineral resources of which Moscow gets a lion's share.

A correction that the discourse on Russia urgently needs concerns these nationality issues. The Russian Federation is not the same as ethnic Russia, yet of its inhabitants only Russians profit from Western attention and largesse. On July 15, 1994, the Senate voted in a foreign aid bill that contained $839 million for the former Soviet states, including over half a billion dollars for Russia. One may be sure that this money will not go to the Confederation of Peoples of the Caucasus, United Nations of the Middle Volga and the Urals, Siberian Independence Movement, Sakha-Yakutia, or the Far Eastern Republic—all created recently to ease the dependence on Moscow of various regions of the former Russian Empire. If these regions eventually succeed in breaking away and allying themselves with Japan, India, Turkey, Iran, or the former Soviet republics, the "inner empire" of Russia may follow the route of her outer empire. "If these vast areas succeed in breaking away," writes Ambassador Staar, "Russia will be confined to a small piece of real estate in the European part of its former empire—without the size or power requisite for an important role in world politics." This possible scenario is hardly ever contemplated by the American elites, ever solicitous of Russia's imperial interests.

The population of the Russian Federation is 150 million; of these, 120 million are Russians. The population of formerly Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus is about 60 million. Eastern and Central European nations, formerly under Soviet domination, have 170 million inhabitants (excluding Yugoslavia and East Germany). Under the Soviets, these non-Russian Soviet fiefdoms were not exactly favored in terms of industrial and cultural investment. The center was in Moscow, and whatever spoils the empire managed to accumulate—such as scientific institutes, schools and museums, libraries, banks, and centers of learning and information, in short, capital in all forms—were eventually inherited by Russians and by

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no one else. When the spoils of the empire were divided among various Russian institutions on December 16, 1991, A. Alimzhanov, Speaker of the Council of People's Deputies, called this "the final act of lawlessness . . . insulting . . . to the non-Russian republics." When the Soviet Academy of Science was renamed the Russian Academy of Science, its Russian president stated: "In essence, it was always ours." He expressed an opinion, commonly held by Russian elites but studiously unnoticed in America, that the Russians have treated the Soviet Union as *theirs*, in contrast to every other nation that was part of it. They were the primary beneficiaries, in terms of cultural and military identity, of the might of the Soviets. The Bolshoi Theater was maintained at the expense of not only Muscovites but also the inhabitants of Tashkent, but only Russians garnered the benefits of owning such a splendid cultural institution. The Red Army with its nuclear arsenal has been the centerpiece of that terrifying Russian splendor before which American elites have been genuflecting, then and now.

Unlike the Eastern European countries that had to start from scratch after 1989, the former Soviet non-Russian republics did not even have the scratch to start with. Their populations were hit by economic earthquakes that the West has discreetly avoided seeing, turning its cameras at, and sending its scores of journalists to, Russian cities only. For every article in the American press about the fate of the poor in Uzbekistan there have appeared several hundred about the poverty of Mr. Ivanov in Moscow. While Mr. Ivanov makes, on the average, $85 per month, his counterpart in Kiev makes $7, while the minimum wage in Kazakhstan was recently raised from $2 to $3 per month. Americans are oblivious to the fact that for every suffering Mr. Ivanov there are two non-Russians whose living conditions are scarcely better than those prevailing in Third World countries. Sixty-two years ago, during the planned Ukranian famine, Walter Duranty was equally oblivious to the state of that nation, even as he fawned upon "that great light from the East" in Moscow.

It is time to pose the question of why the American media and intellectuals display so much tender solicitation toward Russia and the Russians, while treating 300 million non-Russians of the former Soviet Empire as unpersons. One answer is that the media and intellectuals, of the left and of the right, are attracted to displays of brutal power. Our value system has evolved in such a way as to put on a pedestal those who are leaders in that regard. Such people and such nations have acquired immunity to criticism and that magic quality which encourages worship. This is why the twin powers of Russian art and Russian army are irresistible as objects of fawning attention, why the holes in Russian children's clothes generate more concern than birth defects and starvation in a Central Asian countryside poisoned by chemicals. Power attracts; its trespasses are blurred by its might. Stalin's famed question "How many divisions does the Pope have?" underlies many a learned article and book written by think-tank gurus. American culture has been increasingly hospitable to the language of violence and power. Russians have mastered that language to perfection, and American elites seem to be mesmerized by it. Rudyard Kipling's "The Truce of the Bear" captures remarkably well that singular quality of pitifulness and terror that Russians have so often projected in the West for their exclusive benefit.

It is of course in Russia's interest to encourage admiration and alarm, pity and sycophancy in those who deal with her on behalf of America: journalists, scholars, statesmen, and ordinary citizens setting up countless "exchange programs," which bring Russians here to study high tech and send Americans to Moscow to study Russian literature. The song of "Let us help Russia for this is in our interest" is being sung in unison by vastly divergent groups, and thus it is perhaps not entirely spontaneous. The more people hear it, the louder it becomes, as new voices join in. And a country so wounded, a population so desperate are unlikely to be hostile. This increases the good will of Americans and also helps to create a climate for American reductions in military spending.

The tender solicitation bestowed on the Russians is a form of fascination with the power of the gun and of oil fields. Among professional Russia-watchers, it is also related to a desire to keep and strengthen their own professional standing. The concern with the plight of Russians in non-Russian republics (has anyone ever shed tears over the plight of Ukrainians or Uzbeks in the Russian Federation?) and sentimental waxing over the multiplicity of beggars in Moscow (how different the accounts are of beggars in India) are hardly caused by a sudden upsurge of Christian compassion.

The oft-repeated opinion that the Russians have been "humiliated" by the troubles of their empire is of similar provenance. Russia is one of the most imperially successful states ever to exist. She has subjugated numberless peoples and nations over the last 300 years. The Russians profited enormously from their conquests. The history of Russia equals ceaseless expansion since the fall of the Mongols (whose empire, incidentally, coincided with the territory of the former Soviet Union). This expansion is like kleptomania, like an addiction. Long before the Soviets appeared on the world scene, Russia was an army with a country, rather than a country with an army. Russians are land-hungry, even though they have not been able to populate, assimilate, or civilize the lands they have conquered. Yet instead of turning a searchlight on this problem (the way we have done with the Nazi conquests), we become, like Linda Richman, *verklempt* at the mere mention of the aggressor's humiliation at going home. What about the humiliation of the peoples whose homes the aggressor invaded?

The idea that the Russian Federation in its present form can evolve into a benign authoritarian state, let alone a democracy, is utopian. The federation is torn by disparate interests. Russians dumping nuclear waste in the Sea of Japan while installations capable of processing that waste stood idle near Murmansk illustrate this point. If Russia aspires to normal statehood and freedom for its citizens, it has to disintegrate. If the Russian Federation does not disintegrate, it means that it has remained a tyranny, regardless of appearances. Telling the Russians that they are victims rather than creators of their own fate is like offering drinks to an alcoholic. Instead of trying to develop a dialogue with their Russian counterparts, American intellectuals have preferred to adopt the vision of Russia that comes from that country's propagandists.

For Russia to choose normal statehood would mean making a radical turn away from its own history, which the Russians have been indoctrinated to adore. Americans are delaying the process of Russia's maturation by their persistent courting of the empire's elites, whether they be socialists or nationalists. Kibitzing and flattery from abroad prolong the status quo rather than helping the Russians face up to themselves. ©

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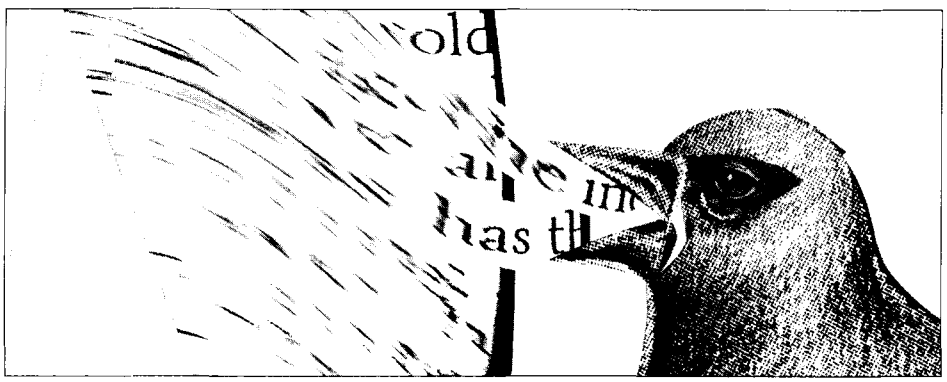
Seven Years

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

"The Gaseous Verterbrata who own, operate and afflict the universe have treated me with excessive politeness, and when I mount the gallows at last I may well say with the Psalmist (putting it, of course, into the prudent past tense): The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places."

—H.L. Mencken



Anna Mycek Wodecki

Mencken: A Life
by Fred Hobson
New York: Random House;
672 pp., $35.00

◆

In the past 23 years, enough material has been released from the sealed deposit left by H.L. Mencken at his death in 1956 to superannuate the late Carl Bode's *Mencken*, published a quarter-century ago and a pedestrian job in any event. Thus the time had arrived for a new and definitive biography of the critic, journalist, philologist, and memoirist, and it cannot be said that Fred Hobson, author of *Serpent in Eden: H.L. Mencken and the South*, has wasted the opportunity. *Mencken: A Life* is incomparably superior to *Mencken*, and while written without the dash of William Manchester's *Disturber of the Peace: The Life of H.L. Mencken* (published several years before its subject's death), it is well written enough, with an objectivity and distance that Manchester's early experiment in the technique of the New Journalism, heavily reliant on a sort of literary chameleonism, precluded. Terry Teachout, reportedly at work on still another biography of Mencken, is left in the uncomfortable position of a man whose swimsuit has been stolen in the public baths.

Since the publication of Mencken's *Diaries* in 1989, fashionable criticism has emphasized the "dark side" of H.L. Mencken, by which is meant his generally unflattering opinion of various peoples of color, as well as—in particular—of the Jews. Hobson, too, finds himself unable to dodge this boring and trivial issue, but only in the course of discovering a more profound darkness that previous biographers and critics seem barely to have sensed, though intimations have always been present for the discerning and sensitive reader of Mencken's writing.

Manchester, it seems, may have been at some pains to portray the Sage of Baltimore as largely devoid of self-consciousness, a moonfaced, rotund little man in a rumpled seersucker suit whom professional success and, later, fame discovered without his having sought, or even much considered, them. By contrast, Hobson reveals Mencken the careerist: shrewd, a clever businessman with an eye for publicity, and a superb self-promoter, adept in many of the mysteries he denounced when they were practiced by Babbitts, Rotarians, Hollywood agents, and politicians. (Although Hobson's insistence that Mencken was at bottom a genuinely modest man may seem contradictory, the argument is well supported in the larger context.) Similarly, Manchester's Mencken is something of the rube—the hick from provincial Baltimore—he himself mocked: uncomfortable amid the carnal temptations of New York City, the proper Victorian who was moreover too busy professionally to chase after the ladies and who, at the time of his marriage in his 50th year, remained hardly less innocent than his famous "Girl From Red Lion, P.A." Yet the facts are as Hobson presents them. Mencken was ordinarily not rumpled but had his suits custom-tailored (as photographs have always attested). Nor was he short for a man of his generation (five feet, eight inches) or—except on occasion—notably overweight. Nor, finally, was he physically unattractive to women, but rather the reverse, as more recently available documents, from the Mencken estate and also from those of a number of his paramours, attest. Particularly in the

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1920's when he was in the prime of life, at the top of his form, and at the peak of his notoriety, he found himself in a position to make the most romantically of his carefully cultivated celebrity—and did so. Even after his wife had died, leaving him a bachelor once more at the age of 55, he had many opportunities for love—including, apparently, Blanche Knopf and Marcella Du Pont—although he rejected all of them.

More surprising and somewhat disconcerting is Hobson's portrait of H.L. Mencken as a man deeply concerned with his own social standing. While the Mencken family had possessed intellectual distinction in Germany in the 17th and 18th centuries, the American Menckens, established in the United States in 1848, occupied a modest enough position in the city of Baltimore, where they felt themselves superior to their fellow German-Americans and indifferent to the Anglo-Saxon establishment. As a young man, Mencken scorned—or professed to scorn—Baltimore society; as an aging one, he joined the exclusive Maryland Club, where he dined and drank with the flower of Baltimore society. Most troubling, however, is the reader's growing awareness of an ego of uncomfortable and finally truly alarming proportions. Mencken's egocentricity was not of the kind that obliterates kindness, generosity, thoughtfulness, and ordinary human decency, since Mencken was all his life a loyal and dutiful son, a dedicated brother, and a man capable of deep friendships (although in these he could also be distressingly unforgiving on occasion). Neither was it of the sort that creates an impermeable aura of self-importance. Hobson comes closest to describing and identifying it when he refers to Mencken's obsession with being at all times *in control*, and closer still when he remarks upon Mencken's enormous pride—by which he does *not* mean vanity.

It was his colossal ego that drove Mencken to leave, as Charles Fecher (the editor of the *Diaries*) has written, "the most complete collection of manuscripts, letters, miscellaneous papers, and other memorabilia of [almost] any writer in the English-speaking world." "From his 50's on," Hobson adds, "he was actively engaged in the business of posthumous image management"—a task that occupied an increasing amount of his time at the expense not of his familial obligations and social involvements but of the work itself. After his mental incapacitation by stroke in 1948, Mencken stated that his chief regret in life was not having accomplished all the writing he had wanted to do, and in fact a number of long-planned works remained incomplete. Yet, were it not for the "Diaries" (begun at the age of 50), for "My Life as Author and Editor" (a manuscript that was eventually edited and published by Jonathan Yardley), for "Thirty-Five Years of Newspaper Work," and for other, similar, projects, many or all of the intended formal manuscripts might have been finished. The choice was his, and he decided in favor of preserving the life rather than advancing the work. It is not one that many artists would be likely to make. I can recall wondering years ago, as a graduate student blasting away through the immense collection of letters, mostly trivial, in the New York Public Library, why Mencken had thought that anyone would really *care*.

Previous biographers have had little to say on the subject of Mencken's health prior to the catastrophic hemorrhage of November 23, 1948. But Hobson is careful to demonstrate how his physical deterioration, becoming apparent shortly after the trauma of Sara Haardt Mencken's death at the age of 37 in 1935, resulted three years later in a minor stroke that led him to conclude that he would not live long past 60. By 1940 or thereabout his condition was "perilous" from arteriosclerosis, and Dr. Ben Baker of Johns Hopkins warned him that a fatal stroke or coronary could fell him at any time. Thereafter, though he was to live for another 15 years, he did so in the fear and later—after 1948—in the hope that every day might be his last. In the autumn an agnostic's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of immortality, and such thoughts as these, more than anything else perhaps, were the impetus behind the immense labor of self-preservation. For years I had suspected that H.L. Mencken would have made a devout Catholic, and Hobson's careful and revealing treatment of Mencken's exceedingly ambivalent attitude toward religion—Catholicism in particular—goes far to justify that suspicion.

Believing that nothing is plainer than that the universe is grounded upon law, and that law is necessarily an expression of will, Mencken regarded atheism as the philosophy of fools. Yet while he remained an unbeliever all his life, Mencken was also a superstitious man—with good reason, as the aweful Friday the Thirteenth again and again brought disaster to himself and to close family members. Indeed, Hobson calls attention to what he describes as "that same order and harmony, a remarkable symmetry" to his life—a symmetry that pious commentators, operating from a supernatural perspective, would find intriguing. Strange as it may seem, the Hound of Heaven appears to have dogged Henry Mencken's 75 years, from the time when, as a small boy, he had looked west from his upstairs window into the convent garden of the House of the Good Shepherd and watched the nuns promenading there to the final days of his life when, from the same window, he observed another generation of sisters. His fascination for religion was life-long, as was his sensitivity to its beauty and charm—again, primarily in their Catholic manifestation. After reading Hobson's description of the seven terrible last years (seven, as with a biblical drought or famine), when Mencken could neither read nor write and sometimes barely even speak, any homilist worth his salt would conclude that he was being offered a final chance. He never took it. Why not?

The answer, of course, is pride—pride in the purely human as well as in the theological sense. He was, after all, a man who had always congratulated himself on never having changed his mind on any matter of appreciable substance, and on no subject had he been more noisily dogmatic than on the "preposterousness" of Christianity. But more importantly, the author who in his *Treatise on the Gods* had described the Bible as "probably the most beautiful book in the world" found himself simply unable to accede to a faith that for 2,000 years had appealed to hundreds of millions of "human blanks," as well as to hundreds of thousands of the world's greatest intellects. In regard to Christianity, Mencken was less impressed by Louis Pasteur's Catholicism than he was by a Tennessee yokel's fundamentalism. In this crucial matter of Christianity, the intellectual and social pride of Henry L. Mencken finally condemned him, more thoroughly and terribly than any of his greatest detractors, in his lifetime or since, could possibly have contrived to do.

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The Missionary's Son

by Allan Carlson

Henry R. Luce: A Political Portrait of the Man Who Created the American Century
Robert E. Herzstein
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; 521 pp., $30.00

◆

Henry Luce both created and dominated a new form of national journalism between 1930 and 1960. Founder and editor-in-chief of *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune*, he is best remembered for his 1941 *Life* essay "The American Century," a robust call for the United States to assume world power status.

Robert Herzstein, Carolina Research Professor of History at the University of South Carolina, offers in *Henry R. Luce: A Political Portrait of the Man Who Created the American Century* a detailed analysis of the ideological makeup and consequences of this essay. The results are mixed. Able discussions of Luce's use of his magazines to force political change and of symbolically important internal disputes among *Time-Life* editors are marred by a limited understanding of his subject's goals, a confused point of view, and repeated genuflections to contemporary ideological demands.

"America First" enthusiasts will find a full-blooded villain in Herzstein's portrait of Henry Luce. As early as 1920, the author reports, "Harry looked forward to helping America make the world safe for democracy, Christianity, and free enterprise." Financially supported by the wealthy Chicago widow Hattie McCormick and boosted by his Yale and Skull and Bones credentials, Luce sought to remake the world. "Isolationism" was his regular foe, and he hoped to use American entry into a new European war to bury it, just as Lincoln had used the Civil War to bury slavery.

Oblivious to the conflict between a regime of liberty and the demands of a democratic empire, Luce consistently pressed for American intervention in European and Chinese affairs. For example, Herzstein details Luce's considerable role in conceiving and selling to a "reluctant" Franklin Roosevelt the "Destroyer for Caribbean Bases" deal in the summer of 1940. Luce's efforts in those months included close collaboration with "the Century Group," a cabal of New York-based internationalists "who believed in America's global mission and their own right and duty to influence United States foreign policy" and who included the Reverend Henry Sloane Coffin, playwright Robert Sherwood, and Union Theological Seminary President Henry Pitney Van Dorn. They also involved timely production of the pro-intervention film *The Ramparts We Watch* by Luce's "March of Time" division, private meetings and secret deals with Roosevelt himself, and the publishing of an unusually long essay in *Time* on "The Strategic Geography of the Caribbean Sea," which cited the need for bases that only British colonies could supply.

The author shows how anticommunism supplanted antifascism in Luce's scheme in 1945, including a fair appraisal of Whittaker Chambers' influence in redirecting the American crusade within the pages of *Time*. He offers extensive treatment of Luce's obsession with China. Born there as the son of an American missionary, Luce never wavered in his belief that Chiang Kai-shek represented China's authentic soul and future. Among the fascinating details that Herzstein brings to light are lectures given by Luce's own father in 1941 (which offered a far more accurate view of both Chiang and his communist rivals), as well as internal *Time-Life* memoranda deeply critical of the Nationalist regime, which Luce squelched.

Yet while sorting through Luce's foreign policy agenda with some skill, Herzstein misses the related domestic goals implicit in Luce's political vision. He skirts over Luce's fairly deep attention to the American problems of consumerism and religious conflict, which led to a focus—respectively—on the "family-centered" suburbs and the attempted integration of Catholicism into the American myth. As Luce once explained, the goal of *Life* magazine was to instill a sense of history *and* destiny in the average American, to show "that 'civilization' isn't just a word—it's a something that 'means you'!"

Part of the problem derives from Herzstein's fairly overt hostility to religious expression of any sort. Found throughout the volume are sophomorically secular passages such as: "[Luce's] father ruled, however gently, at home; the headmaster at school; and God, of course, governed all." Or: "When Harry delivered a sermon on China in a church, proceeded and followed by processional, anthems, and organ postludes, he would describe China. . . ."

The author's abhorrence of a traditional morality pops up in other ad hominem asides, including a description of Luce's 1945 visit to his birthplace: "After surviving this ordeal, Luce arrived in Chengtu. There, he heard that the Chinese ran two whorehouses, one fair and one good. He made no inspections. Instead, Harry toured the college campus, where he took tea with some of the students." Still more disturbing are passages such as this commentary on women editors working at Time Inc. in the 1940's: "Perhaps they were afraid of bumping into a glass ceiling, which Luce, like many contemporary employers, had built but could not see. Ultimately, things began to change, but not until many years of pressure had eroded traditional prejudices."

Not content to describe the America he discovered and observed, Henry Luce worked with considerable success to remold it into the image formed by a small boy in a Chinese missionary compound. Despite kowtows to his colleagues in the faculty lounge, Herzstein's book does add new details and insights to the emerging portrait of Luce as ideologue and architect of "the American Way."

Allan Carlson is president of The Rockford Institute and publisher of Chronicles. *He authored the entry on Henry Luce for* The Dictionary of American Biography.

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The Coming Campaign

by Clyde Wilson

American Populism: A Social History
by Robert C. McMath, Jr.
New York: Hill and Wang;
245 pp., $19.95

◆

"Populist" is a term so fraught with distortion and so apt to raise misleading connotations that we probably should find another word to use. It is worse in this respect than even "Whig" or "liberal." Taken precisely, it refers to a political movement that swept some agricultural regions of the further Midwest and South in the late 19th century.

American historians have generally treated Populism in one of two ways: they have either confused it with the Progressivism that followed shortly on its heels, as a forerunner of the New Deal and modern liberalism; or, in a slightly more sophisticated and honest version, they have dismissed it as misguided rural bigotry irrelevant to the goals of enlightened urbanites.

The first interpretation is clearly wrong. It is true that there was some slight coincidence of political goals, in terms of federal legislation, arising from the Populists' search for specific remedies. But Populists were basically rural Jeffersonians who mistrusted the remote and concentrated power of the Eastern elites who were the most obviously observable cause of their own distresses. Most of the Progressives, at least in the East, were self-consciously modern. They believed in the rule of elite urban experts (themselves) to solve all social ills by the application of science and systematization (regimentation). They were hired hands of the ruling class despised by the Populists, and still are. No Progressive that I know of was an enthusiast for free silver, and Progressives from east of the Mississippi almost all joined the homefront clamor for the War to End All Wars. Populists did not, and in fact provided the greatest core of patriotic opposition.

The first school of historians wanted to find honorary ancestors for the 20th-century political movements they favored and over-emphasized the element of Populism that suggested a stronger central control of the economy. The latter school was a later generation of Ivy League liberals who wanted to distance themselves from the at-times messy and uncontrollable tendencies that were likely to develop if American yahoos from the boondocks were turned loose. Thus, they emphasized the bigoted and eccentric aspects of the Populists that were more likely to lead to Joe McCarthy than to George McGovern.

Most certainly the Populists were ethnocentric, and some of them were eccentric as well. But there is not the least evidence that the Populists were *any more* ethnocentric or eccentric than any other Americans of their time, including the conservatives and the Progressives. As American historians have tended over and over to do, these writers built their interpretations of our multivarious and magnificent past on small fragments of movements rather than the whole. (They have done this with the Revolution, Jacksonian democracy, Reconstruction, and much else.) That is, they always emphasize the bits of evidence that support whatever interpretation the Northeastern intelligentsia finds fashionable at any particular moment and ignore the substantial evidence that conflicts. Thus, Arthur Schlesinger uses a few Boston intellectuals to interpret Jacksonian democracy, and Populist historians have used a few crazy Kansans to characterize a much larger and different movement.

We now have for the first time a careful, accurate, full, and well-synthesized survey of Populism in the work of McMath, an economic historian. McMath understands the social and religious fabric, the mores, and the inheritance of political ideas out of which Populism arose. He understands the ecology and economy of the grain, cotton, tobacco, and mining regions where the movement flourished.

He gives a clear and succinct account of the origins of Populism, its impulses, its social fabric, its political history (nationally, regionally, and state-by-state), and its relation to other phenomena such as the cooperative, labor, and free-silver movements. More importantly, he understands the basic political inheritance, which was not socialist or Progressive but which rested on pious allegiance to Jeffersonian democracy and the defense of the liberties of the common decent people who labored in the earth and produced real goods, as opposed to the slick operators who did not delve and span but grew rich on the government. (The bank and railroad corporations that the Populists attacked were, after all, not paragons of private enterprise but rather privileged collaborators of the political elite.) The author also understands that these instincts are as much or more "conservative" than "liberal," although he clearly prefers the latter.

No, Populists were not the kind of people who wanted to confiscate your income, unless you were particularly rich and arrogant. They were not the kind of people who would make you wear your seat belt and forbid you to light up a stogie, for your own good, or send your children across town to achieve some abstract balance of school population and the Marines halfway round the world to save democracy in some place where they don't know democracy from cornflakes. We ought to give the glory of fathering (or rather mothering) those great accomplishments to the Progressives. A Populist, on the other hand, is someone who thinks those bast--ds in Washington have too much power. He votes for George Wallace, Ross Perot, or Pat Buchanan, not for George McGovern, George Bush, or Bill Clinton.

Ponder this wonderful reactionary and timely passage from Ignatius Donnelly's oration at a Populist National Convention:

> We meet in the midst of a nation brought to the verge of moral, political, and material ruin. Corruption dominates the ballot box, the legislatures, the Congress, and touches even the ermine of the bench. . . . The newspapers are subsidized or muzzled; public opinion silenced; business prostrated, our homes covered with mortgages, labor impoverished, and the land concentrated in the hands of capitalists . . . the fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes, unprecedented in the history of the world, while their possessors despise the republic and endanger liberty. . . . We charge that the controlling influences dominating the old political parties have allowed the existing dreadful conditions to develop without serious effort to restrain

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or prevent them. They have agreed together to ignore in the coming campaign every issue. . . . In this crisis of human affairs the intelligent working people and producers of the United States have come together in the name of justice, order and society, to defend liberty, prosperity and justice.

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The Russian Frontier

by Gregory McNamee

The Conquest of a Continent: Siberia and the Russians
by W. Bruce Lincoln
New York: Random House;
500 pp., $30.00

◆

America, the historian Frederick Jackson Turner had it, is a land defined by its frontiers, once inexorably westward-lending, led by Manifest Destiny. The cultural geographer Carl Ortwin Sauer gave Turner's "frontier thesis" a twist that denizens of the New West will appreciate: "The westward movement in American history," he wrote, "gave rise to the real estate boom, made land the first commodity of the country and produced the salesman promoter. It was the latter rather than any public official who planned and directed the settlement of new lands."

Some readers may be surprised to learn that it was thus in Russia as well: that entrepreneurs and developers, individual and corporate, directed the growth of that nation to its eastern frontiers, finding in the endless taiga and forests of Siberia the material basis for a vast empire. W. Bruce Lincoln's *The Conquest of a Continent* addresses the rich history of the Russian frontier in the broad sweep of 500 pages. While he necessarily glosses over much that is of deeper interest, he gives us the best outline of Siberian history now available to readers in English.

Russia had long known the east, from whence came a wave of fearsome invaders: Mongols and Tatars, the cavalries of Temujin and Tamur the Lame. They burned their way into European Russian memory from the very first; one of Russia's earliest histories is by the Chronicler of Voskresensk, whose pages recount a countryside where "nothing could be seen but smoking ruins and bare earth and heaps of corpses."

It took a Russian of like fury to send the Golden Horde packing, and the then-ruling Stroganov merchant class found their champion in one Ermak Timofeevich, a Cossack who had hitherto romped across Poland putting the torch to all that lay before him. Ermak was a crude man but a brilliant tactician, and in short order he defeated a mighty Tatar army on the banks of the Irtysh River, which secured most of Siberia for Russia as early as 1582. Ermak later drowned in that same river, pulled to its unfathomable bottom by the weight of his armor during another fight with the Tatars; his successors fought mainly guerrilla wars against native armies for another century, but Ermak's deeds made their work relatively simple.

Lincoln goes on to offer a lively *précis* of the history of Siberian exploration, recounting the crucial expeditions of Steller and Bering, of Fedorov and Krasheninnikov, whose work extended Russia's eastward reach as far as Northern California. (Strangely, Lincoln overlooks the 19th-century mapping expeditions of Peter Kropotkin, the prince who became one of anarchism's great theoreticians.) That record of exploration is spottier than Lincoln—or a homegrown Russian chauvinist, for that matter—might like to admit. Kamchatka's coastline was mapped in the 1730's, but the interior contours of Siberia were not thoroughly charted until the last decade, and even then parts are not well known today.

The comparative study of frontiers is still nascent (we need a scholar to analyze, for example, the histories of both New Spain and Roman Iberia, looking for structural similarities), but Bruce Lincoln does not shy from drawing parallels between the Russian and American frontier experiences. While noting that Russia's eastward movement began a full century before America's westward forays, he looks carefully at the way the California and Alaska gold rushes mirror those of Tomsk (1828) and Iakutsk (1840), all propelled by men who, as a Russian journalist put it, "were without the fear of God and without feelings of shame." That recklessness, Lincoln notes, allowed the buffalo hunters of the Great Plains and seal hunters of the Siberian seaboard alike to drive species to the brink of extinction within two generations' time.

Lincoln uncovers many little-known episodes in Siberian history. For one, he takes a fond look at the Russian-born intellectuals who founded a Siberian separatist movement to resist Nicholas II's plans to build a trans-Russian railroad; those intellectuals knew that once Siberia was bound to Moscow by an iron rail, an iron fist would quickly follow. (They were right, of course, as they learned when Siberia was absorbed into first the Russian and then the Soviet Empire and finally transformed into a vast penal colony.) Lincoln's study of censuses shows that from 1897 to 1911 more than three and a half million European Russians crossed the Urals into Siberia. He has mastered archival and oral-historical literature, and his book is rich with anecdotal notes—of, for instance, a Red Army machine-gunner's terror at facing battle-hardened White Guards for the first time in the impenetrable forests of Transbaikalya.

Similarly, Bruce Lincoln is attentive to the fine details that make history—and that make history come alive. He gives us an exact list of a Mongol cavalryman's effects ("a cuirass of thick leather . . . a fur or sheepskin coat, a fur hat with ear flaps, felt socks, heavy leather boots . . . dried meat, ten pounds of dried curds, a leather bottle filled with two liters of fermented mare's milk, at least two quivers, each with a side pocket with a file for sharpening arrows, an awl, and a needle and thread"); he quotes tellingly from a minor 19th-century exile's diary, noting his disgust at the village life of the native *lakuts* and at the lack of Russian companionship; he tells us that the shimmering fur of the Russian sable gave rise to the ancient story of the Golden Fleece, remarking that "this small animal that was scarcely larger than a house cat became the magnet that pulled the Russians across the entire Eurasian continent before 1650." In such details, the Talmudists said, God resides. In whatever event, they make for consistently engaging reading.

Siberia remains a land of great promise, pockmarked, to be sure, by radioactive waste dumps and forgotten

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prisoners, by homegrown fascists like Valentin Rasputin and unrepentant communists like Vladimir Skurlatin. Bruce Lincoln closes with an appreciation of Siberia's complexities and of its uneasy relationship with Russia. Like his earlier histories of the Red Army and of revolutionary Russia, *The Conquest of a Continent* is thoroughly satisfying. I wish only that the author had found room in his ample bibliography for V.K. Arseneyev's stirring memoir *Dersu the Hunter*, the basis for Akira Kurosawa's 1975 film *Dersu Uzala*. (Readers moved by Lincoln's book will want to see both that movie and the Soviet television-produced epic *Siberiade*, only recently released.) Otherwise, *The Conquest of a Continent* is a model of scholarly thoroughness and a pleasure as well.

Gregory McNamee's latest book is Gila: The Life and Death of an American River *(Crown Publishers).*

Tally Halt!

by J.O. Tate

The Columbia History of the British Novel
edited by John Richetti
New York: Columbia University Press; 1064 pp., $69.95

◆

The history of the British novel is a great topic that must periodically be reconsidered, particularly now when we are so much more sophisticated than those provincials who wrote the novels as well as those belletrists whose accounts of those novels have become hopelessly passé. Looking back, we have to smile at Edward Wagenknecht's *Cavalcade of the English Novel* (1943), the 30th and last chapter of which is devoted to that giant, Walter de la Mare, author of *Memoirs of a Midget*. Surely a thoughtful and contemporary approach would be productive, as expounded by many academic authorities and published under the aegis of a university noted for its distinguished professors and its riots.

And indeed we do find in this history of the British novel many useful pages. The best chapters, I think, are Robert M. Polhemus's on Lewis Carroll and Michael Seidel's on James Joyce. Professor Polhemus has a charm and energy that are uniquely kinetic—though those qualities may be misplaced here, since Carroll didn't write any novels. Professor Seidel has also written an inspired response to great writing that emphasizes "langwedge" with a success not easily found elsewhere in this volume. Delightful commentaries such as these make us want to read, but too much of this history makes me want to take a long walk.

Because there is too much modish theory and tendentious revisionism, there is too little literary history and not enough novels. George McCartney, who has written elsewhere with authority on Evelyn Waugh, does so here once again in a most instructive way. But a glance at *Brideshead Revisited* provokes an awareness that quite a bit is missing not so much from his account of Waugh as from this history of the British novel. When, for instance, in chapter two of that memorable work, the narrator remembers being invited to dinner by Anthony Blanche, the complex come-on is put this way: "We will drink Rhine wine and imagine ourselves . . . where? Not on a j-j-jaunt with J-J-Jorrocks, anyway. But first we will have our *apéritif*." Well, of course. That outrageous poof, Anthony Blanche, hints at Oscar Wilde's witty depreciation of the English cult of fox-hunting: "the unspeakable in full pursuit of the uneatable." But the cultural divide between Blanche and Wilde and the Higher Sodomy and aestheticism of Oxford, on the one hand, and the traditional rough-and-tumble of manly pursuits and blood sports on the other, evoked by a narrator in uniform during a world war, is expressed in this British novel through an allusion to—a British novel. Waugh and the fictional Blanche and the narrator all expected recognition of R.S. Surtees's *The Jaunts and Jollities of that Renowned Sporting Citizen, Mr. John Jorrocks, of St. Botolph Lane and Great Coram Street*, usually known as *Jorrocks' Jaunts and Jollities* (1831). But that is not the only reason why I was rather disappointed to find Robert Smith Surtees omitted entirely from this history of the British novel.

And such was not my only disappointment, I must say. Even George McCartney treats Wyndham Lewis as a mere influence on Waugh and not as a puissant creator in his own right. Elsewhere Lewis's *Apes of God* (1930) is barely noticed, and there is no mention of those outstanding British novels *Tarr*, *The Revenge for Love*, and *Self-Condemned*, to name but three. The chance is muffed to put Lewis—peer and enemy of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and D.H. Lawrence—in perspective. Martin Seymour-Smith, in his *Who's Who in Twentieth-Century Literature* (1976), put it this way: "Lewis is without question the greatest English-language writer of the century and one of the greatest in world literature." That may be overstating the case a bit, but not by much. Anyway, if the greatest British novelist of the century isn't Waugh or Lewis, then perhaps he must be Pelham Grenville Wodehouse, who is, needless to say, also neglected.

But there's no need to be so modern. Those word-soaked geniuses, James Joyce and Wyndham Lewis, were keenly aware of the verbal brilliance of Thomas Nashe, a "novelist" and pamphleteer before Shakespeare hit his stride. But—you guessed it—Nashe isn't mentioned in these pages, either. Agatha Christie, the best-selling writer in world history, isn't mentioned. Neither is John Buchan. But I suppose by now it must be clear that we should attune ourselves to what *The Columbia History of the British Novel* is telling us, rather than enumerate all of its shortcomings.

A quick impression goes something like this: the British novel from its beginnings has been obsessed by feminist stridency, Stalinist politics, and a homosexual agenda. That is why theoretical appeal to the writings of contemporary feminist theorists, Stalinists, and homosexuals is authoritative, because the disinterested thoughts of feminists, Stalinists, and homosexuals are directly attuned to the contexts of authors who have been dead for a century or two. Gothic novels are about homosexual panic; Jane Austen's lucidity and comprehension are an illusion; repression and conformity produced bad fiction in the 1950's.

If it was rather silly of Wagenknecht to give one chapter of 30 to Walter de la Mare in his history of the British novel, what are we to say of Professor Richetti, who has delegated one chapter of 39 to Doris Lessing and her memoirs of a munchkin? Perhaps we should simply ascribe that blunder to affirmative action, since it has nothing, like remarkably much in this book, to do with writing.

Still, there is much to learn from *The*

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Columbia History of the British Novel. You learn, for example, that no matter how meager your bibliography is, you should always include a citation of the editor or associate editors, if at all possible. You learn, too, that anything that gets you out of the house is good for you. A long walk promotes health, neighborliness, and improved knowledge of local architecture and trees. And finally you learn to tell your children not to major in the humanities, but to reserve the pleasures of reading for private life. Accounting, business administration, premed—that's the ticket.

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Oratorio in the Ruins

by Richard Waller

That summer in Rome, Rome—the name itself
is a measure of time, and it may be
that Rome and Time are synonymous,

for each is a quality, like starlight,
that can't be measured. Both flicker like an old
silent movie, stopping and starting through the

centuries, flowing backwards, then forwards,
until Time disappears altogether leaving
only images suspended motionless in space,

images like those the evening I took my seat
among ten thousand in the Basilica of Maxentius,
the last great law court built in Imperial Rome.

It was begun by Marcus Aurelius Valerius Maxentius
and finished by Constantine the Great after he
slew him at the Milvian Bridge in the year A.D. 312.

I sat beneath the sunken panels of one of three
immense remaining vaults overarching its space
for sixteen centuries. Filing in on stage below

was the Bachgemeinde Choir of Vienna
and the Orchestra of the Academy of St. Cecilia,
founded by Palestrina in 1566.

The oratorio that evening was *Die Jahreszeiten*—
The Seasons—in German, set to the music
of Haydn, and completed in 1799.

The year was 1953. I was in my twenties,
awestruck with admiration as I "looked across
the Forum at the Colosseum, and gazed

at the temples, tiled with gilded bronze,
on the Capitoline hill, and wondered at the
number and size of the basilicas

and triumphal arches, the statues, obelisks
and fountains, the baths and libraries,
circuses and theatres" and the pines of Rome.

"Are those dull breaking sounds the crunch
of Christian bones in the Colosseum?" "No,
it's the tympanist in the Orchestra of St. Cecilia."

"Was that the cry of a gladiator
dying like a beast in there?" "No,
it was a horn warming up in the back row."

"I think it's just awful what the Nazis did
to this town." "For God's sake, Helen, this is
the Roman Forum. Hitler had nothing to do with it."

The verve of the crackling overture began,
surrounding us with the breath of spring in the ruins
and of planting and ploughing and heavenly showers

that kissed the furrows with the promise of plenty,
and the sounds of sheep and bees and birds and boys
and girls dancing in green meadows to fresh music.

Weird effects in the orchestra simulated
the withering heat of summer, the ripple of brooks,
of storms, of flights to safety, and calms,

and the sound of milking in cheap tin buckets,
of quails and crickets and the croaking of frogs.
Haydn blew his stack—but he *was* commissioned.

Autumn brought harvest choruses and love duets,
fiddle scrapes, bagpipes, drones of the hurdy-gurdy
und tanzen und trinken around wine barrels,

and the sounds of hounds and hunters and horns
and the bound of the stag from the copse to the field,
the tally-ho and victory chorus of the exhausted hunters.

Fogs and chill winds ushered in winter's gloom,
retreat to the fireside and the spinning wheel:
knurre, schnurre, knurre, whiz, wheel, whir.

The music ended in joyful praise to Him
from Whom all blessings flow with major chords
that must have awakened Constantine himself,

and Spartacus and Nero and the ghost of everyone
who ever died on the bloody floor of the Colosseum.
In just two hours, we had endured four seasons

under a coffered vault that has seen six thousand.
Time made the clock tick again and for an evening
like that, Rome, you did well to decline and fall.

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Letter From Finland

by Jacob Neusner

Postcommunist Judaism

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After two days of intensive sight-seeing in St. Petersburg, Russia, not so much a city as a cemetery holding the remains of what was once a city, I returned to Finland and turned on the St. Petersburg TV channel that we get here in Åbo. St. Petersburg TV was broadcasting a show about Russian Jews in Tel Aviv—a program of Russian Jewish humor made in Israel. What a contrast! St. Petersburg is grim, dirty, decaying. The trams belong in museums, the buildings crumble, the people scavenge for food, the parks abound in weeds, whoever does not beg steals if he can. Russian Jews in Israel—with their fine Jewish faces and their vital Jewish humor—looked lively, witty, and joyful—everything St. Petersburg is not.

I asked myself: Why should any Jew in Russia, now free to emigrate to Israel, want to stay there? I see no compelling answer to that question. Russian Jews have been out of touch with Judaism for three generations. Hitler wiped out much of the population possessed of knowledge and memory; Stalin obliterated a thousand years of spirituality. Today Russian Jews gain no native access to the resources of Judaism—either the books that convey its wisdom and spirituality or the human beings who embody its learning and sanctity. The heroic refuseniks underwent political martyrdom; none left a legacy of religious consequence. In Russia, to be a Jew is an ethnic identity, stamped on a passport. But that identity carries with it only confrontation with contempt, for, as everyone knows, the broad rivers of Russia's anti-Semitism run deep, swift, and very cold.

True, *aliyah*—migration to Israel—carries its costs. But the reward vastly outweighs them, for Russian Jews in Israel choose from among a hundred choices of what being a Jew may mean. The identity carries with it sanctity for some, a sense of fulfillment for others, and the sheer joy of being ordinary for another group—for all, it decries nothing but pride and well-earned self-esteem. For none is identification as a Jew defined by outsiders, who commence with hatred.

But Russia is miserable not only for the Jews. Trying to find a visual representation of the human condition in Russia, I think of the palaces of the czars and the churches of their day. Like the great stone heads on Easter Island in the remote Pacific, they speak of an age incomprehensible today, in a language no one speaks. And the same is so of Judaism, the ancient faith.

Whatever the future brings—and for the so-long-abused, suffering Russian people, who can wish anything but good?—tomorrow brings no more palaces. As for the transcendent churches of St. Petersburg, Russia will do well to retain what it has and is not likely to compete with the achievements of a glorious age of faith.

Seventy years of de-Judaization also mark three generations of de-Christianization, and while both great faiths renew themselves, neither draws on deep roots in a near-term past. But while Christians can look at surviving churches and their martyrs to remember and try to renew, where are Jews supposed to find their models? In neither native stone nor native-born models can they find definition for what they may become. American Jews took three generations to define for themselves a distinctively American and enduring mode of being Jewish, and they drew, and still draw, on learning and living memory to form the viable future we now have. Russian Jews have nothing but the broken stones of an edifice none today can hope to reconstruct.

In that context, why should a Jew stay in Russia instead of emigrating to Israel? Russia holds no future for Judaism, so far as a future depends upon the native resources of a vital present. Russia never valued the Jews and does not value us today. "But if not there, then where?" is a question easily answered. Israel wants the Russian Jews, needs them, values them, has placed a lien on the whole world of Jewry to help them settle within its borders. Israel offers them an entire menu of Judaisms for their taste. It can take Jews possessing nothing more than a vacant ethnic identification and turn them into joyful partners in the ongoing debate that defines the state and dignifies its people.

Then what of the United States? In the bitter American Jewish debate of the 1970's on whether the resources of the Jewish community worldwide should be divided between emigrants to Israel and those to the United States, I took the view that, with scarce resources, we have rationally to allocate what we have by appealing to the public interest and not only to private preference. World Jewry has taken as its first priority the building of the Jewish state. Whatever resources we muster to help Jews find a better life should then flow to the building of the Jewish state. We also called into question the capacity of American Jews to explain to newcomers the wherefores and hows of being Jewish according to our model, which works in its context but in no other. Israel is the sole destination for those who turn to world Jewry for help, since only by devoting all scarce resources available for migrants to Israel can we accomplish our primary goal of building the Jewish state, our secondary goal of helping Jews to be Jewish, and the subsidiary one of helping Jews to improve their private lives.

Today the same is so. But times have changed, both for the better and for the worse. Jews can legally leave Russia, and Israel is ready to receive them. Who would have dreamed? But anti-Semitism renews itself, and any explanation for the great hatred that appeals only to the economic crisis and ignores the deeply rooted Russian contempt for Jews and the Russian Orthodox Church's deep loathing of Judaism is insufficient. Russian Jews not only *can* leave; for the sake of the future they *should* leave. Judaism has no future in Russia. Money spent on building Judaism there buys a dubious present and extends false hope. The only future that Jews in the former communist countries can hope for if they wish to live as Jews—and, I fear, if they wish to live at all—will take place in the state of Israel.

Jacob Neusner was recently Visiting Research Professor at the Research Institute of Åbo Akademi, Finland's Swedish-language university.

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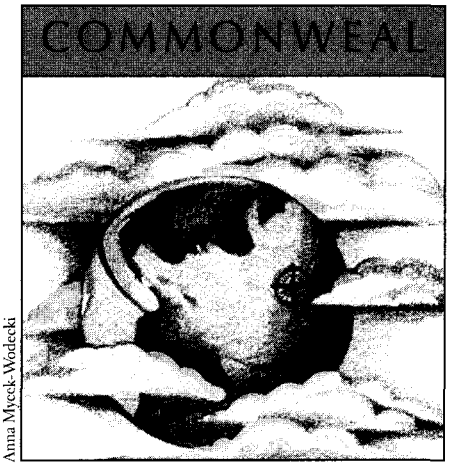

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Professor Burnham, Mafioso Costello, and Me

by Ralph Robert Toledano

A Cold War Reminiscence

Not long after the conviction of Alger Hiss, Professor James Burnham, Karl Hess, and I met in my apartment on Riverside Drive to discuss a matter that had concerned us for some time. Jim Burnham was then working on his book *The Web of Subversion*. Karl, like me, was a *Newsweek* editor, and he had when it was pertinent used the Press Section to illuminate some of the darker corners of the communist assault on our institutions. I had written two best-sellers—*Seeds of Treason* and *Spies, Dupes, and Diplomats*, the one dealing with the Hess Case and the other on the great Richard Sorge spy ring, whose ramifications extended from Germany and Japan to the American State Department.

We all had the background to ask the question: Why was it that the FBI and other intelligence agencies always discovered the identities of the leaders of the Soviet espionage *apparat* only after they had returned to Moscow? And what could be done about it? The revelations and disclosures of important witnesses like Whittaker Chambers dealt with past history, and what they reported, though of tremendous importance in reconstructing a sorry era, had only tangential current pertinence. Legal restraints tied the hands of the FBI. Could private citizens, acting like an anti-Soviet posse at their own risk, do something about it?

Mulling these questions over, we came up with a plan that perhaps had a chance at success. After discussion, we agreed that a process of "triangulation"—whereby counterintelligence agents who pick up a radio signal from different points can, by elementary trigonometry, locate the clandestine transmitter—might do the trick. In my years of covering what was known as the "subversive beat" and of talking at length with secret and public defectors from the *apparat*, I knew of those who worked on the outer fringes of Soviet espionage rings. If those people could be picked up and made to talk, we would step by step approach the center, turning over the tapes of our activities to the FBI and other agencies.

The details worked themselves out as Burnham, Hess, and I discussed the possibilities. The plan, we agreed, would require the purchase of a house in Greenwich Village, where strange comings and goings would cause no comment, a sound-proofed panel truck, and the services of a young doctor or medical student who could administer the dosage of sodium Pentothal that would loosen the tongues of our "subjects." The peripheral figures, forced into the panel truck, drugged slightly, and delivered to the Greenwich Village house, would be questioned, with a doctor in attendance to see that there was no over-dosage of Pentothal, and would lead us to the next and closer group. The converging lines of our information would take us where they met, in the person of the spymaster. It would have to be a quick operation, since our threat to each agent that we would announce his voluntary complicity should he report what had happened to him might still lead to eventual confession.

We estimated that the entire operation would cost no more than $50,000, which even in the 1950's was not that vast a sum of money. And Jim Burnham felt that he would have little trouble raising it from some of the men of wealth he knew who professed their undying devotion to the anticommunist cause and to the war on Soviet subversion. He was, as we should have known, mistaken. After a few weeks of trying to raise the money we needed, he had gotten only praise for the project and respect for putting his distinguished career and reputation at risk over so dangerous an operation. They themselves, they said, could not possibly get involved.

It was at this point that I recalled a small bit of recent Cold War history—one of the many episodes that never get into the history books. In 1948, the United States was fighting to stem the growth of Europe's communist parties. Key to Truman's policy was Italy, where the Christian Democrats were seriously threatened by one of the most powerful of these parties. To give aid, James Forrestal (who later died under mysterious circumstances) had organized Operation Brook Club—perhaps the most exclusive club in New York and so named because many secret meetings took place on its premises—to collect and funnel money to the Christian Democrats, who had been unable to match the resources of the Moscow-financed communists. Millions of dollars were transmitted to Italy through Cardinal Francis Spellman and the Catholic Church.

At a critical point, however, there was a sudden and immediate need for a strong financial infusion—I have been told that it ran to about $1 million—and Cardinal Spellman suggested that the most likely source would be Frank Costello, then one of the most powerful members of the mob. Costello was called in to the Powerhouse—the Cardinal's home and offices abutting St. Patrick's Cathedral, and according to the accounts I have heard, the conversation went like this:

Spellman: Frankie, do you believe in the free-enterprise system?
Costello: Of course.
Spellman: Are you a patriotic American?

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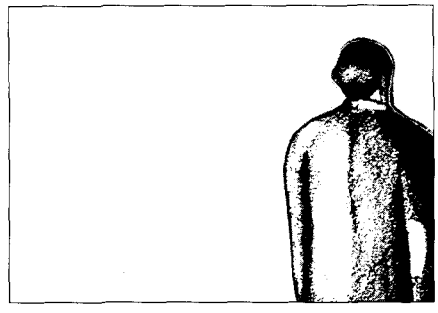
Costello: Of course.
Spellman: And do you want to go to Heaven?
Costello: Of course.

"Then we need you to get us . . ." and Cardinal Spellman named the specified sum, to be turned over as quickly as possible. The funds were supplied forthwith, and presumably Frank Costello received his pass for the Pearly Gates. Fantastic as it seems, this story has been checked out, though it will probably be denied by the CIA, which was involved in Operation Brook Club.

Burnham, Hess, and I decided that perhaps Frank Costello might be willing to finance our nickel-and-dime operation, with the understanding that should the law crowd him too much, his participation might be considered an extenuating factor. We knew, as well, that the Mafia had little love for any political system that impinged on its scope and its operations. To approach Costello was certainly worth trying. Costello's lawyer, I knew, was George Wolfe, so we called him and made an appointment. At our first visit, we gave Wolfe a schematic account, with almost no particulars, of what we were hoping to achieve, and we hinted diplomatically at how Costello's help might also help him in the future. "You know, of course, that Mr. Costello is not a rich man," Wolfe said blandly. "But I'll talk to him. See me next week."

When we returned the following week, Wolfe told us that "Mr. Costello is interested and would like to know more of the details." But, he warned us again, "Mr. Costello is, as you know, not a rich man, and $50,000 is a lot of money." We suggested that he might have friends and elaborated on our plans. Again we were asked to return the following week. At the next meeting a much more expansive Mr. Wolfe assured us that "Mr. Costello" was very interested but wanted even more details. These we happily supplied, certain that he was ready to participate and to give us the money we needed.

But clearly, Frank Costello was not going to be taken in by what could be a scheme to relieve him of 50 grand. As we talked to George Wolfe, there was a knock on his office door and three of the biggest, most sinister-looking bruisers walked in. "We come to get de papers," one said, and for several minutes they carefully stared at us in what was surely an eyeball frisk. Then, having memorized our faces, they picked up a handful of papers from Wolfe's desk and departed. We got the message and left with the injunction to return the following week to get our final and, we were certain, affirmative answer.



But another kind of history was on the move. Between the time of our visit and the time we were to return, Estes Kefauver and the Senate Committee to Investigate Organized Crime set up shop in New York, sending out subpoenas to Frank Costello and other crime figures to appear at a series of sensational televised hearings. (Frank Costello refused to sit for the cameras, and he made investigatory history by allowing only his hands to be shown.) When we called Wolfe's office to confirm our appointment, it was "James who? Ralph who? Karl who?"—and most important, "Frank who?" The project was dead, and Jim Burnham never mentioned it again to either of us or, I believe, to anyone else.

Years later, Karl Hess and I blessed the Kefauver Committee. For on more serious thought, we realized that the "triangulation" could easily have blown up in our faces. Neither Karl nor I had much to lose, but it would have meant the destruction of James Burnham as a professor, a writer of important books, and a figure who in the realm of politics and ideas commanded great respect from most intellectuals, though not George Orwell. But even had our half-baked scheme worked, we would have been the target of an enemy not to be underestimated, the KGB. Even my journalistic efforts at exposing Soviet espionage and subversion led in time to phone calls to my wife, threatening to kill me and our children. Even here there was irony, for when I applied for a permit to own and carry a gun, a New York sergeant of detectives said, "Nah. If somebody takes a shot at you, we'll let you have it."

Ralph Robert Toledano writes from Washington, D.C.

Sanctions

by Murray N. Rothbard

War on the Cheap

The modern weapon of "sanctions" seems made-to-order for the foreign policy of Bill Clinton. Remarkably evasive and unprincipled even for a modern politician, Clinton is possessed of a horror of commitment in both his personal and his political life. The armamentarium of minute differentia in sanctions allows Clinton to posture at length as a man of peace or of toughness in foreign policy while seemingly keeping all of his options open. In particular, sanctions allow the President to assume moral stances while avoiding any unpleasant consequences.

Sanctions are measures to inflict economic pain on countries whose governments in some way displease the United States. They can range from seizure of the other country's assets in the United States to embargoes on financial dealings, investments, or trade. The embargoes can range up to all imports to, or exports from, the sanctioned country. The attractive point to the President is that they exert coercion upon another country without actually dropping American bombs or sending American troops into harm's way. War on the cheap; exertion of American force on relatively defenseless nations. What could be more attractive?

Bill Clinton, it is true, scarcely invented the sanction device. It has been used ever since Woodrow Wilson launched the perpetual global crusade to impose replicas of American institutions throughout the world. Franklin Roosevelt's sanctions against the Japanese in the late 1930's—embargoing oil to Japan and confiscating Japanese financial assets in the United States, coupled with Secretary of State Hull's ultimatum to the Japanese in late November 1941 to get out of Indochina, or else—drove Japan in desperation to attack Pearl Harbor, thus falling for the trap set by FDR to get the United States into World War II against the wishes of the American people. Presidents Reagan and Bush enforced stringent economic sanctions against South Africa, under cover of United Nations agreement. But with Bill Clinton, sanctions seem to have tak-

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en over as almost his only foreign policy. Sanctions against the Serbs are starving them and ruining their economy; sanctions against the Haitians are accomplishing similar goals; and there are a wide variety of sanctions against the North Koreans to prevent them from acquiring one or two puny nuclear weapons. Of course, by the time this article appears in early fall, Clinton may have already decided it is worthwhile to go to war against any of the three countries above.

Typically, these Clintonian sanctions embargo all trade with the hapless country except for "humanitarian" food and medicine, but in practice food and medicine can't get into the country either, as the Serbs and Haitians have discovered. For how can every plane and every truck be searched in order to exempt whatever food or medicine might be on board? Typically, too, sanctions, from the mildest to the severest, don't "work" in the sense of forcing the country to obey American commands. They don't work for a simple reason: if the sanctions are mild, they don't have much effect; but if they are severe, the economic pain is inflicted *not* on the country's power elite, who manage to live high off the hog regardless of what happens, but on the country's hapless subject population. Victims of American embargoes in Serbia are not Miloshevitch and his ruling elite, but the Serbian people; sufferers from starvation in Haiti are not the ruling military, but the subject people.

Remarkably, the more candid advocates of sanctions admit they don't work, which means that they can only escalate to the severest forms. The United States must then either forget about the whole thing or launch a military strike. So what's the point? The point of sanctions is to shore up the psyche and the political prestige of the sanctioners, that is, the American rulers. To the hue and cry of the pundits and the sentimental watchers of CNN who ask, "How can you sit and watch [fill in almost any country] and do nothing?" the President can reply: "I *am* doing something. I'm imposing sanctions." As far as actually changing the actions of the despised governments, this is almost beside the point. Sanctions "work" by buying time so that the President can baby the situation along for another few weeks or months without having to commit to any real course of action; they also "work" by enabling him to throw a few bones to the permanent-war crowd and allowing him to oppose whatever foreign evil is being held up for attack this month. And who knows? If the President babies the situation long enough, maybe something will turn up, Allah will provide, or maybe he can stick his successor with the accumulating mess.

Meanwhile, the permanent-war crusaders, the laptop bombardiers, are not really satisfied; in the name of the High Moral Ground, they keep calling for Serbian or Haitian or Korean or Iraqi blood. But even if their full satisfaction has to be postponed, they are partially appeased by contemplating the sight of the United States, in its moral crusade, at least inflicting starvation on millions of poor Serbs, Bosnians, Rwandans, etc. It's a measure of the debasement of current political discourse that the thirsters after starvation and mass murder are considered the "moralists," while those of us opposed to such measures are denounced as "selfish," "uncaring," and "standing by while . . ." In the end, however, participating in mass murder and imposed starvation seems to rank a bit worse on one's scale of values than refusing to do so.

But the biggest delusion concerning sanctions is the notion that they are a moderate alternative to war. Under international law, sanctions are considered an act of war, and indeed how could they not be? In old-fashioned pre-Woodrow Wilson international law, nations were supposed to leave the trade of other countries alone; even warring countries were not supposed to interfere with the rights of neutral nations to trade with their enemies. Moreover, in old-fashioned pre-Wilson international law, carved out over the centuries by scholastics and jurists and more or less adhered to by all civilized nations, civilians of enemy countries are never supposed to be targeted. You are not supposed to bomb enemy civilians unless they are directly in the path of military attack (a fortified city in the path of battle). Sanctions and embargoes, however, are pure attempts to injure the civilian population and thereby put pressure on government to change its ways. But on the contrary, the sanctioned government will be able to rally the public behind it even further, in common and justifiable hatred against the American sanctioner, who has not even had the candor and the guts to declare war.

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Sanctions, then, are in no sense a substitute for war. They are a warlike act and a cowardly and deeply immoral means for the United States to inflict pain on hapless civilians without suffering any sort of retaliation. Perhaps one day, in some far-off future, the worm may be able to turn, and the sanctioned country may be able to turn the tables. It will be interesting to see how the President, and the permanent-war pundits, would react to a little sanctioning themselves.

Murray N. Rothbard is a professor of economics at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and vice president for academic affairs at the Ludwig von Mises Institute.

The Business of Escape

by Christine Haynes

Peter Mayle's Provence

Peter Mayle has dominated the nonfiction best-seller lists in recent years with his chronicles of life in the south of France. *A Year in Provence* and *Toujours Provence* (both published in the United States in 1991) even spawned a four-part television series, which was produced by the BBC and has run regularly on the Arts & Entertainment Network since its debut in the spring of 1993. Mayle's name has graced (and sold) picture books and calendars featuring paintings of Provence, and his first novel (set in—where else?—Provence) received a favorable write-up in the *New York Times Book Review* when it appeared last fall.

Mayle's recent literary fame—and fortune—has only enhanced the already comfortable life he was leading as a former advertising executive-turned-writer. In an interview with Mayle last October, *Publishers Weekly* described his writing career as "one stroke of luck after another." Mayle ended a 15-year career in advertising (split between London and New York) in 1975, after he sold his manuscript for an illustrated children's sex manual entitled *Where Did I Come From?* to a publisher in 15 minutes. (The book is still in print and has been translated into 17 languages.) This success inspired 12 relatively lean years of writing in Devon, England, before Mayle and his third wife Jenny decided to move to Provence, where they had vacationed for years, in 1986. Both *A Year in Provence* and *Toujours Provence* recount how they refurbished an 18th-century farmhouse near Ménerbes and adapted to new physical, linguistic, and gastronomical surroundings.

Mayle follows a long line of both French and foreign writers about Provence, and many of his observations have already been made by others. This makes them no less true—or amusing. Mayle makes good use of his senses, following the example of Lawrence Durrell, who "experienc[ed] the country with [his] feet as well as [his] tongue." He shows an appreciation for the grey crags, green brush, blue sky, and yellow light that comprise Provence's scenery, as well as for the garlic, melons, goat cheese, herbs, asparagus, olive oil, thick-crusted bread, and robust wine that constitute its cuisine. Indeed, food and drink are as much of an obsession for him as they are for the French themselves. Mayle's *Year in Provence* begins with a New Year's Day lunch and ends with a Christmas dinner of leg of lamb at a nearby *auberge*. In between are trips to various markets and *boulangeries*; lessons in truffle gathering, game hunting, olive pressing, and rabbit husbandry; and introductions to cherry picking and grape harvesting. As M.F.K. Fisher once observed, even the lower classes in France eat well, and Mayle's descriptions of a truck driver's lunch or a peasant's evening meal make an American reader wish for a day in the life of a French worker or farmer.

But Mayle's books offer more than menus. In both his fiction and his nonfiction, Mayle is a modern-day Henry James in his attention to the habits and characteristics of France's natives. He does a particularly nice job of conveying what Durrell termed the "conversational salt" of the Midi. His accounts of the Provençal language (". . . it was a rich, soupy patois, emanating from somewhere at the back of the throat and passing through a scrambling process in the nasal passages before coming out as speech"), greetings ("To be engulfed by a Provençal welcome [is] as thorough and searching as being frisked by airport security guards"), and gestures (". . . jerky aerobics . . . accompany any heated conversation in Provence—shoulders twitching, arms waving, hands waggling in emphasis, eyebrows threatening to disappear upwards into [one's] cap") border on caricature, as critics of both his books and the TV series have argued; but, exaggerated or not, these images elucidate the personality of a people.

Yet such comments reveal only the comic side of the Provençal character; as Jacques Chabot noted in a book called *La Provence de [Jean] Giono* (1980), there is another more somber and secret side to this character, especially among the inhabitants of the mountains of Upper Provence. Mayle's sketches exhibit only a superficial understanding of both the natural elements and the human history that shape life in Provence. To be sure, Mayle refers to the intense heat and bright light of summer days here, but for him they mean no more than the necessity to spend afternoons by the pool. In reality, such heat and light affect perhaps the most important—and certainly the most precarious—resource in Provence: water. The viewer of Claude Berri's film *Jean de Florette* (based on a novel by Provence's most popular native-son, Marcel Pagnol) can sense the torridity produced by a summer without rain in frames of hazy sky, withered stalks, and dead rabbits accompanied by a sound-track of chirping cicadas. (As Alphonse Daudet—another native-son—remarked, the shrill cry of the cicadas "seems the very resonance of the immense luminous vibration" of a July afternoon.) Jean's long, painful, and—ultimately—fatal struggle to supply his household and small farm with water after his neighbors have plugged the spring on his property illustrates why Pagnol's compatriots consider water to be "liquid gold." Lack of water in summer can mean seemingly interminable droughts (and sometimes forest fires), while too much water in springtime can yield dangerous floods. This and similar dualities (as between the burning heat of the sun and the frigid gusts of the "Mistral," a wind that sweeps from the Alps down the Rhône Valley to wreak havoc with the hats—and temperaments—of all Provençaux) profoundly influence both natural and social life in Provence.

Jean Giono, among other Provençal writers, recognized the "cycle of eternal return" inherent in these dualities. Nature to Giono is sensual, and days as well as seasons are not linear but round. Man's labors follow nature and are there-

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fore round as well: plowing leads to planting, which in turn leads eventually to harvesting, until the cycle is completed and plowing begins again. Lawrence Durrell, steeped in the Greek and Roman past of the region, noted the "momentous simultaneousness" of history endlessly repeating itself and recycled Giono's geometrical metaphor in the title of the last chapter of his book *Caesar's Vast Ghost: Aspects of Provence*—"*Le Cercle Refermé*" ("The Circle Closed Again").

History also suffuses the poetry of Ezra Pound and Frédéric Mistral. Pound took a "voyage through time and space" for the notes that became A *Walking Tour in Southern France* (edited by Richard Sieburth). For him, the land of the Troubadours is a land "thick with ghosts," and his journey takes him back to his poetic origins: "[I]f we are to understand that part of our civilization which is the art of verse," he wrote, "we must begin at the root, and that root is medieval. The poetic art of Provence paved the way for the poetic art of Tuscany; and to this Dante bears sufficient witness in the *De Vulgari Eloquio*." Mistral likewise seeks his roots in Provence, although (in contrast to the expatriate Pound's) his connections to the region are not only poetic, but physical, linguistic, and social as well. In his memoirs, Mistral recounts how at the age of 21 he returned from Aix-en-Provence, where he had attended law school, to his father's farm to rediscover these roots for himself and others:

> Then and there . . . with my foot on the threshold of my father's house and my eyes turned toward the Alpilles, I made a silent vow to myself: first, to raise and revive in Provence the traditional spirit that was being destroyed by all the schools and their false and unnatural education; second, to promote that revival by restoring the natural and historical language of the country, against which all the schools were waging a war to the death; third, to bring Provençal back into fashion through the benign influence and divine fire of poetry.

It is Mistral's familiarity with the history of his family (an old line for which the great wind is named) and his region that inspires his writing.

Poetry and farming are both sacred arts to Mistral; he is a troubadour in the truest sense of the word, "one who seeks to find" the spirit of a place—or of mankind. It is this sense of place and self that writers like Mistral, Durrell, Giono, Pagnol, Pound, and M.F.K. Fisher express so eloquently—and that Mayle unfortunately seems to lack. Unlike other writers who have made Provence even temporarily their home, Mayle has made no effort to cultivate either nature or himself. Mayle does not see, as did Durrell, that Provence is a "place of revelations"; he does not experience, as did Pound, any "epiphanies"; his memories do not, as did M.F.K. Fisher's, become part of his "spiritual marrow"; his Provence is not, as was Giono's, the setting for a universal tragedy based on the "terrible joy of existing." In contrast to another Englishman now living in Provence, Julian More, Mayle does not have "southern France in [his] blood." More's pictorially and literarily gorgeous book *Views From a French Farmhouse* consequently reveals more of the region's essence in its reflections on four seasons there than any number of sequels to A *Year in Provence* ever will.

The reason for this is simple: Mayle does not comprehend that quality of life is based on more than physical comfort; he fails to see that it also requires spiritual enlightenment. Mayle's novel *Hotel Pastis* demonstrates his fondness for the former and his neglect of the latter. While *Hotel Pastis* is certainly an entertaining book, it offers no enlightenment (except maybe a hint to stay away from hotels run by and for the rich and famous) but only escape. *Hotel Pastis* is the story of Simon Shaw, a British advertising executive who, like Mayle himself, flees the harried and glamorous life he has been leading in London to settle into a (at least initially) more tranquil existence in Provence. While Simon supports himself by opening a hotel rather than by writing a travelogue, the parallels between him and his creator are transparent—his financial worries are trivial (nonexistent), his female companion is a gourmet cook, his contact with locals consists mainly of conversations with the architects and workers he employs to fix up his property, etc. Although there is an adventure with some bank robbers thrown into the mixture this time around, Mayle essentially repeats the anecdotes about life as a newcomer to the region that he relayed in A *Year in Provence* and *Toujours Provence*.

Hotel Pastis is not merely repetitive; it is blasé, and Simon's recurrent whining about the ennui he feels first as part of London's wealthy and beautiful set and then as the owner of a hotel that attracts this set is tiresome. In escapist mode, Mayle identifies Provence with "no executive committees" and "perfectly tanned cleavage." While he aims to show the superiority of the business of living over the business of business, it is business pure and simple that wins out in the end—in both the novel (when Simon abandons his hotel to handle advertising for a Texas millionaire) and the life (the 50-something Mayle is reportedly a millionaire himself now). Mayle cannot break out of his role as a propagandist for consumer society; ever the adman, he approaches Provence as if it were a product to be marketed, and his books have all the slickness of a promotional brochure.

Mayle will never be more than a permanent visitor to Provence, and his picture of the region is that of a tourist. Jacques Chabot, in his examination of Giono's Provence, warns against such obliviousness to the mysterious, solitary, haunting, and painful side of the place: "it is necessary—under risk of letting oneself fall into the ideological flatness of I don't which Edenic-touristic Provence—to savor *all* the salt of that immediate and concrete existence which would change, in the absence of death (the salt of life), into insipidity." Mayle, who never contemplates much of anything beyond his next meal, fails to find any salt in his paradise.

But, then again, his books do make for a fun read, which is more than can be said of most best-sellers these days. And maybe it is enough that he has renewed interest in a region that embodies so much of the West's poetry and history—and that has so much to teach us not only about death, but about life: how to walk slowly, work hard, eat well, enjoy nature, and converse with our fellow men. As Matthew Arnold wrote in *Empedocles on Etna*:

> Is it so small a thing
> To have enjoyed the sun,
> To have lived light in the spring,
> To have loved, to have thought, to have done . . .?

Christine Haynes is the assistant editor of Chronicles.

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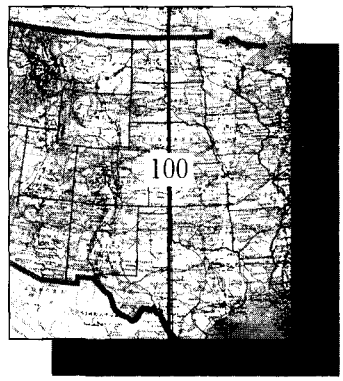
The Hundredth Meridian

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Work Suspended



If compensation is possible for a summer so brief that the growing season is limited to 55 days at best, it is the most beautiful Indian summer on earth climaxed by elk season in the last two weeks of October.

While friends of mine, here and elsewhere, seem politely convinced that writing is merely a reasonably transparent excuse for hermitism and other forms of indolent and antisocial behavior, nevertheless the writer's trade is, always has been, and ever will be among the most arduous means invented by man to answer and assuage the call of his inner vanity. As much as his neighbor toiling in the coal mines or contemplating the rear ends of a hundred head of cattle from the back of a tired cow pony, the writer requires his respite; his period, however brief, of rest and recuperation. Come the 13th of every October my work, finished or not, is done for the following week or ten days, and I have joined the majority of able-bodied men in town, all of them buying supplies from the IGA store, sighting in their rifles, attempting to catch their horses on the back forty, loading their pickup trucks and backing them up to their horse trailers and campers, and kissing their wives and children goodbye, while trying to look sorry about it.

By late morning on the 14th of October 1993, I was on my way west to Twin Creek to collect my animals, and by midafternoon we were rumbling along the dirt roads north from Kemmerer through Pomeroy Basin, across the braids of the Oregon Trail, under the steep long brow of Sheep Mountain, across South Fork of Fontenelle Creek, past Krall's ranch, over the cattleguard that marks the National Forest boundary, and along the base of Absaroka Ridge to Fontenelle Crossing. Here the horse trail begins its ascent by Bear Trap Creek to my perennial spike camp beneath Indian Mountain, but having been caught out in the past by snowstorms and mud I have learned to continue another six miles, following Little Fall Creek down to La Barge Creek and parking in a meadow beside the gravel road. Of course this extends the ride in and out by 12 miles, but peace of mind is worth it. Last year I had a wrangler, Linda Meller, along to handle the horses for me while I devoted myself to the hunt. Since she bred them both and sold them to me for enough money to pay for her children's orthodonture, she ought to know as well as anyone what she is doing.

Except for writing, every one of my activities is about gear. We spent 45 minutes saddling the horses; loading on the packs that straddle the croup behind the cantle; attaching the lariats, canteens, bedrolls (tied into the saddle strings ahead of the horn), and the guns slung in their leather scabbards from the D-rings and tucked beneath the skirts; and making the necessary adjustments and balancings. As we were about to depart a game warden, on loan for the season from another part of the state and unknown to me, drove up and asked to see my permit. We rode out from La Barge Creek, where Joseph La Barge was killed by Indians in 1825, at just past five o'clock on a ten-mile ride through the shortened light of a mid-October evening.

We made good time on the clay road, arriving an hour and a quarter later at the crossing. The trail begins as a jeep track ending at an old hunting camp, beyond which it narrows to accommodate a single horse before going on above the floodplain of Bear Trap Creek, where the curious beaver swim in slow circles behind their dams. The slope rises steeply on both sides of the creek, sagebrush and aspen on the south-facing aspect, black timber and talus on the north. Clinging precariously to the bank, the badly eroded trail crumbles in places beneath the horses' hooves. I have never aspired to be rolled on by a fully loaded horse. At the third or fourth turn we came upon a cow moose who stubbornly held the right of way for several minutes; as twilight approached I reined in to glass the long ridge high above, where the big bulls hold. Where Bear Trap descends through a pass on the left, the trail goes right and the angle of ascent becomes more acute. Breaking from the heavy timber, we watched a herd of doe deer browse their way peacefully through a stand of aspen thin as cobweb in the deepening dusk. By the time we had struggled up the steepest stretch to the treeless saddle, the light was almost gone. Within the pine forest on the other side of the saddle it was entirely gone, yet a strange glow persisted as if rising out of the ground, which rang with a hollow sound beneath the hooves. By it we made our way on to camp, unloaded the horses, raised the tent, and gathered wood enough for a small fire to heat our supper of canned beans and chile.

The alarm sounded at six-thirty in total darkness within the nylon tent. Linda had slept badly in her lightweight bag and could not be roused. I slipped from my own bag, fully dressed except for my boots, crawled from the tent into a faint dawn streaked with a few high clouds and brightening above the spires of the trees, and lifted my orange coat and rifle from the snag where I had placed them the night before. The air was cold, but not cold enough to have frozen the cold sweet water in the canteen. Moving carefully, I walked off from camp through the subacqueous light in the direction of Indian Ridge, already turning pink at the top where the horse trail goes over. More carefully still—three steps forward: halt, look; three steps forward—I began to flank the ridge, a 45-degree slope of red clay and shale intermittently covered by deadfall, a few windblasted old pine trees, and clumps of supple new growth replacing them.

A movement like the drop of an eyelash caught my attention: a tail whisking somewhere among the young trees. I put the glasses on these and found a cow elk and two calves, their cream-colored scuts turned to me. Searching farther, I saw a second cow; farther still and a thin ray of sunlight assumed material form

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out 300 yards. A spike, perhaps a forkhorn: any elk is a good elk, you can hunt for weeks up here without seeing anything. A rock ten feet away offered a rest. I crept to it, knelt, cradled the forestock in my gloved hand, took aim, and fired.

The young bull lifted his head and stared above my own into the tops of the trees behind me as the crash of the explosion rebounded around us. The vertical distance was greater than I had estimated, causing me to hold too high and send the bullet a foot above him. I settled the crosshairs on the brisket and fired again. The bull staggered under the impact of the hit, turned slowly, and walked behind the root mass of a fallen tree overgrown by saplings. By the time I reached him he was stretched on the ground, with just enough strength to scrape the duff with his hooves. I circled him carefully, and discharged a final shot into his neck. Back in camp, Linda had heard the reports and had coffee waiting when I arrived there.

We were on the kill an hour later, Linda with her camera, I with my knife, saw, and a pair of hatchets. I spent some time and even greater effort in turning the 600-pound carcass to position the hindquarters downhill from the front ones, and in rolling it securely onto its back. Then, taking a pinch of belly skin, I ran the point of the knife under it and slit the tough hide from pelvis to brisket. The paunch, pale, slick, and warm, smelled powerfully of sagebrush. With the knife, I cut it free of the encompassing frame of bone and cartilage, and severed the esophagus, windpipe, heart, and lungs—pulverized by the 150-grain .338 Win. Mag. slug—while the body cavity filled with the purple blood. Then, seizing the hind legs below the elbow, I rolled the carcass twice, three times, and spilled the guts in a pile on the ground, saving only the liver which I placed on a tree stump close by.

I severed the legs at the knees and elbows, cutting first with the saw, then popping and crushing the ball joints with a hatchet, and moved up to the neck and head, which I removed above the shoulders. By now it was noon and we were beginning to tire, particularly Linda who had been holding the camera all morning to photograph the butchering, but still the work was only started. I paused to chase a camp robber off the liver, which in any case was shriveling in the sun (I don't care for the stuff myself), and to strip off my leather vest, flannel shirt, and bandana, everything stiff with the dried brown blood, before setting to work again in my Army wool pants and long-johns under the hot October sun. With the knife and saw I divided the carcass behind the short rib. Then I upended the front half, set the blade of one hatchet across the top of the spine, and pounded the hatchet with the head of the other. With excruciating slowness, the blade sank into the spinal column, cleaving bite by bite downward through bone and marrow. Many hunters pack in a chain saw for the job of quartering, but as well as being a cumbersome tool it can be a lethal one: several seasons ago a game warden from Big Piney severed his own femoral artery and bled out in minutes beside the carcass.

It was past one o'clock when I finished quartering the front half and began on the hind one, my hands blistered through the bloodsoaked leather gloves, but by two the job was done and we were ready to return to camp for the horses. Or horse: on the single occasion when I tried to pack an elk on the gelding, he ran over me in his headlong flight downhill and threw himself over an embankment into a creek bottom. By three we were back with the mare, who stood patiently tied to a tree while we struggled to heave the front quarters into the panniers, one on each side of the saddle. Then down to camp to unload, and back to Indian Ridge for the hind ones. At four we were once again in camp with the meat cooling on a compacted snowbank and our insides tingling from infusions of Jim Beam cut with handsful of snow.

While Linda gathered wood for a fire, I picketed the horses and afterward sat crosslegged on the pine needles to attack the Jim Beam bottle again, feeling the greatest satisfaction I had known all year: three elk in five seasons is good work. The sun dropped behind the ridge and immediately the darkened air chilled about the orange flames and the column of gray smoke rising through the pine boughs where the saddles, blankets, guns, and ropes hung around the pitched tent. Supper was beef stew, tortillas panfried in butter, black coffee, and whiskey. When we finished eating the stars were out and the horses, grazing clumps of dead grass at the ends of their picket lines, barely visible. I snubbed them to a couple of pine trees for the night and crawled into the tent on hands and knees behind Linda. We zippered into the bags and lay in the dark for some minutes before one of us spoke. "Do you think we ought to move the meat?" "I was just lying here thinking about it." "The horses will warn us if a bear comes." "Um." "Well, shall we move it?" "Yes. Let's go move it." We rose and went out half-dressed into the cold dark where, seizing the great shaggy bull-stinking bloody quarters between us, we lugged them away from camp to another snow drift at the edge of the park.

The wind got up in the night enough to shake the tent, but at daybreak the sky was clear. Because the mare can pack only half an elk at a time, we had two trips to make down to the crossing and back. While Linda made breakfast, I hurried to strike camp, load the packs, and settle the panniers over the mare's saddle. The elk quarters were cold, slippery, and hard to handle, heavier than they had seemed the day before. Linda rode out on the gelding while I followed on foot, leading the mare.

We made slow progress on the steep trail. The dead weight bore heavily on the mare's front legs and knees, and the gelding flared his nostrils and blew each time a breeze carried the scent of elk to him. But it was a splendid morning again, the sky almost white at the horizon and cobalt overhead, the parallel ridges dark with pine and saddled by yellow parks, the tawny desert far below repeating on a lesser scale the series of crests and ridges rolling eastward. On a precarious sidehill we caught up with a mule train packing a couple of elk and a big bull moose, to which the gelding reacted like a rodeo horse. I considered taking my sidearm from under my coat and shooting him, but Linda protested the idea of having to walk out.

We made Fontenelle Crossing by noon, where Linda waited by the creek with the mare, the meat, and herself for company while I took the gelding from her and went loping away cross-country, proceeding from one bow in the road to the next. I made La Barge Creek in half an hour, and 15 minutes later was at the crossing again. I parked the truck and trailer in a swag in the road, and looked up the forested canyon to the distant wall of Indian Ridge, a high red barrier keeping back the sky, where the last elk quarters waited. The gelding stamped. "We're burning daylight," Linda said.

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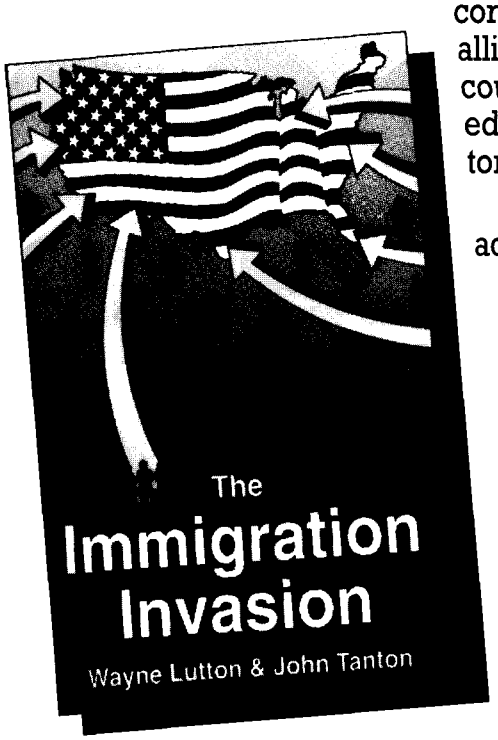

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